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**HOW TEACHERS USE BELIEFS AND KNOWLEDGE
IN CHANGING CONTEXTS:
A MULTI-SITE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY WITH
NICARAGUAN MULTIGRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS**

BY

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B.A., Community Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

In memory of Billy.

On December 30, 2016, Billy began his regular “Directo” route with our neighbors, friends and acquaintances at 3:45pm, driving from Suchitoto to San Salvador. When he opened the bus door to let people board in San Martin 40 minutes into his route, three gang members shot him in the head from the street, leaving his wife a single mother and his two infants fatherless.

I dedicate this study to Billy, and all the other fathers, sons, uncles, brothers and their family members who have been victims of U.S. foreign policy that helped breed the violence unleashed between the *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Mara 18* in Los Angeles in the 1980s; U.S. immigration policy that takes no responsibility for its role in thousands of Central Americans flocking to U.S. borders in search of amnesty from that violence; and the border patrol and ICE agents who illegally send them home to their death instead of providing them their legal right to a lawyer and hearing. While I finished this dissertation, there were months when up to 900 people were killed in El Salvador, a country of only 6.5 million that I call home. Billy became a number in a humanitarian crisis that requires all of us to be alert and alive, working together to demand and create change. So, Billy, rest in peace. You help me continue to work with others towards a better El Salvador, so your beautiful kids and everyone else’s can grow up in a more just, humane and caring world.

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I was never alone during this over six-year effort. Participating Nicaraguan teachers, students, and their families made it possible – none of whom I will name to protect their confidentiality. Family, friends, colleagues and mentors in El Salvador and the U.S. helped me as well. Here I give special shout-outs to my academic mentors, colleagues and family.

Dr. Terri Flowerday introduced me to the academic world of cognition, motivation and culture – and her passion for questioning widely accepted findings about teaching and learning. She was my first professor and academic mentor when I returned from El Salvador to get my masters. Dr. Jay Parkes was a mentor in statistics and assessment of and for learning. He invited me to join his research in dual language education when I was a dual language parent, a focus I continue to this day. For this study, he repeatedly encouraged me to identify the brick rather than write about the entire wall; I focused on a group of bricks in the wall as a workable middle ground.

Dr. Jan Armstrong consistently offered guidance, steering me to an area of research or researcher I had not contemplated. She applauded my insistence on a psychological focus in my qualitative research. Dr. Ruth Trinidad-Galvan and her ethnographic research with women in Mexico served as an inspiration. She reminded me in my previous case study research with Salvadoran teachers to stay with the data and not impose external (theoretical) frameworks before their time.

I give deep thanks to Cynthia Salas who skillfully administers the often unruly tentacles in our Department of Individual, Family and Community Education. Cynthia was critical to my continuing to the finish line. I can't thank her enough. She and my family were my main emotional supports from masters to dissertation, full of friendly reminders as to why I should finish particularly as I felt like I no longer needed to, wanted to or could. I extend a big thanks to the UNM Graduate Resource Center, particularly Anna Cabrera. Anna read my first "drafty-drafts," the most long-winded and meandering that reached 200-250 pages each. She gave helpful feedback biweekly for over a year.

My deepest love and thanks goes to my immediate family, Aurelio and Modesto. Their daily, absolutely unconditional and unwavering support helped us get through this

enormous project unscathed. They reinforced my resiliency to continue in the face of extreme challenge and discouragement, and they never hesitated to remind me to stop taking things so seriously – and to take much-needed breaks.

I never would have attempted this, stuck with it, and finished it without this combination of people who joined many others in support across three countries, two languages and many worlds.

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study investigates how multigrade elementary school teachers in the central-northern mountains of Nicaragua developed and used shared societal, institutional and individual belief systems and knowledge to both understand and decide if, how, when and with whom to act upon the government's values education mandates. To understand teacher use of overlapping beliefs systems, the research provided parallel ethnographic accounts of teachers', parents' and government officials' interpretations and actions regarding values education. The findings suggest that teachers used a wide panorama of overlapping and often contradictory beliefs systems in addition to beliefs about teaching and learning in general and values in particular, values content, students and families. These broader beliefs systems included political party identity, beliefs about Nicaraguan government leaders, religious faith, and patriotic sentiments, all of which the government embedded in the values curriculum. Teachers who used a small set of beliefs systems inflexibly tended to prioritize institutional beliefs and knowledge to guide their practice, particularly compliance. Understanding the beliefs systems and knowledge teachers drew upon – and how they negotiated societal and institutional beliefs systems and knowledge with their own – leads to a holistic and deeper understanding of individual teacher beliefs and how teachers use them with their knowledge in daily practice. Further research is necessary

into the panorama of beliefs systems teachers regularly negotiate in different content areas and settings, and how externally imposed beliefs systems and knowledge (e.g., through curriculum, policy and mandates) work in conjunction with individual teacher cognitions to guide teacher practice.

Keywords: teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, multigrade elementary, values education, Central America

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America
EFA	Education for All (UNESCO)
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FSLN	Frente Sandinista para la Liberación Nacional Sandinista Front for National Liberation
GRUN	Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional Government of National Reconciliation and Unity
MDG	Millenium Development Goal
MINED	Ministerio de Educación Ministry of Education
MINED INFORMA	Ministry of Education INFORMS (on-line articles)
NGO	Non-governmental organization (non-profit implied)
NGEO	Non-governmental educational organization
PLI	Partido Liberal Independiente Independent Liberal Party
PNDH	Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Humano National Human Development Plan (NHDP)
TEPCE	Taller de Evaluación, Planificación y Capacitación Educativa Education Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshop
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture

Chapter One

Introduction

This is a study of how teachers use societal, institutional and individual belief systems and knowledge (and negotiate knowledge gaps) in multigrade elementary schools in central Nicaragua. I examine how participating rural teachers grappled with a constantly changing, top down and mostly verbal values education program that was critical to the government's curricular transformation and community organizing efforts. While contributing to literature on teacher beliefs, the study constructively critiques the Nicaraguan educational system and its role in helping form and influence teacher practices – particularly those it denounced as outdated. Though Nicaraguan government officials, many teachers and most families blamed teachers for the education crisis (citing “bad” or “unmotivated” teachers), this study seeks to understand the crisis from a different vantage point: a psycho-social perspective that analyzes how overlapping societal and institutional belief systems related with those of individual teachers and impacted their practice.

The study points to some of the many benefits to embracing a multi-layered psycho-social perspective. It demonstrates how a multi-dimensional and multi-sited analysis can provide a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of teacher practices rather than refer to generalized blame, biased judgment and simple dichotomies (i.e., good teacher/bad teacher). It also suggests approaches regarding how professional development can identify overlapping belief systems and understandings – including those of participating teachers – to bridge them with new knowledge and practices.

In a pointed commentary of a global movement that seeks to evaluate classroom teachers individually and out of context using questionable statistical procedures, the study demonstrates how a teacher's individual beliefs and knowledge that policy makers profess to measure through standardized test results of student learning cannot be understood statically but rather within the richly contextualized backgrounds, environments, cognitions, relationships and interactions that comprise teaching and learning in daily practice. Essentially, to gain a more realistic and extensive understanding of relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice one must include societal and institutional influences on teachers that teachers negotiate and at times adjudicate, including external (policy and curricular) mandates and professional development imposed upon them.

Who is to Blame?

Profe Adriana taught science for seven years at a private urban high school in the central Nicaraguan mountains before the Sandinista government tapped her to become Assistant Principal at San José de la Montaña High School (SJMHS) in 2007. “I don’t have as much experience as my colleagues,” she admitted. “Some of them have over 30 years, and I only have 14!”¹ Like all high school administrators and most elementary school principals, Adriana and her colleague Profe Rosibel (the principal) were Sandinista political appointees in positions “of trust.”² The Ministry of Education (MINED) tasked them with the responsibility to ensure the communication and supervision of all government mandates and orientations at their school and among all twelve multigrade schools that formed their school nucleus. Adriana explained that her colleague Rosibel moved from over thirty years teaching elementary school to an administrative position in high school because “they sent her here,” referring to MINED and Sandinista party leadership. “She did not have a choice.”³ Rosibel’s stint as Principal at SJMHS was abbreviated by a rebellion organized by the majority anti-Sandinista, pro-Liberal Party teaching staff at the high school. In late August 2013, the MINED designated Adriana acting principal and then permanent principal three months later.

The SJMHS school nucleus included a total of 57 first to eleventh grade teachers. Adriana was the main facilitator of the nucleus. She described her relationship with multigrade teacher members as “mostly administrative and logistical. We do not enter into the pedagogical part at all.”⁴ The last Tuesday or Wednesday of each month, she attended a municipal-level Education Evaluation and Planning Workshop (TEPE⁵) where she received orientations to communicate to teachers along with a meeting agenda she was to follow in that Friday’s Education Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshop (TEPCE⁶) with the classroom teachers in her nucleus. Adriana transmitted MINED orientations she received from her superiors to those under her purview in the nucleus.

¹ Yo no tengo tanta experiencia como mis colegas. Algunos de ellos tienen mas de 30 anos, y yo solo tengo 14!

² De confianza

³ La mandaron para acá. No tuvo elección ninguna.

⁴ Desde el núcleo, nuestra relación con las escuelas multigrade es más que nada administrativa, sobre cuestiones logísticas. No entramos en la parte pedagógica para nada, de ninguna forma.

⁵ Taller de Evaluación y Planificación Educativa

⁶ Taller de Evaluación, Planificación y Capacitación Educativa

In a March 2013 TEPCE, Adriana led the monthly reflection by reading aloud a text provided to her in the TEPE. An excerpt is below:

I want to share with you an imaginary dialogue among different members of the education community. It's called, "Who is at Fault for Everything in Education?" It begins with a teacher talking with her colleagues.

- The Ministry of Education is fully to blame – said one.

- No, my dear Sir – the Minister of Education said, while leaving a cabinet meeting. – Our teachers are fully to blame. They do not comply with the 200 days of classes mandated.

- Lies! – said a union member as she fixed a date for the next strike. – The Minister of the Economy is to blame because he doesn't care about the education budget.

- That is incorrect – said the Minister of the Economy. – Educators are to blame because they only think about their three months of vacation and going to San Juan to eat enchiladas and rosquillas.

- Infamy! – a teacher said, fumbling with her last coins to get home from school. – The principal is to blame because he doesn't defend us.

- That is not true – the principal said, as he attended to a mother complaining about a teacher at his school. – Parents are to blame because they do not control their children and make them study.

- That has nothing to do with it! – said a parent watching a popular television game show. – The television is to blame because it stuns and confuses kids.

- You are wrong! – said a host on a children's television program as he read errors on the cue cards behind the cameras. – Teachers are to blame because they have no imagination.

- Calumny! – said a teacher as she photocopied the same planning from four years ago. – Congress is to blame because the education system is wholly outdated.

- Not true! – A Congressman shouted. – Kids today are to blame because nothing is important to them.

- You all are crazy – said a student as he lit a cigarette in the classroom. – The blame for everything in education lies with the adults because they give us bad models.

- Not true! – said a mother. – The politicians are to blame because they do not offer opportunities or a future for toda

y's youth.

*- Stop! – said the watchperson at the local high school, sitting at the gate and checking people going in and out. – I know who is to blame for everything in education: The blame lies with someone else. The other is always the one to blame!*⁷

As Adriana read the text, teachers laughed and shook their heads at different parts, particularly when the union member fixed a date for a strike and the teacher copied her planning year after year. When Adriana finished reading, more than a handful of teachers offered their thoughts on the many actors in education, how students and teachers suffered under the current system, and how they were all responsible. They agreed they should stop blaming “the other” and that everyone should take more responsibility.

The approach I take in this study mirrors their reflections in many ways. In each chapter, I identify and analyze different kinds of influences on teachers, their understandings, beliefs, knowledge and practices. I draw upon the reflection’s message which in turn related to a popular Nicaraguan government slogan (“Education is a shared responsibility”) and model: “The Shared Responsibility Model.” These multiple and constantly interacting layers of beliefs and knowledge in teachers’ daily lives required a long-term ethnographic commitment.

To achieve my goal of understanding how teachers understood overlapping societal, institutional and individual beliefs and knowledge – and how they used different combinations of them in their practices – I engaged in two parallel ethnographic efforts. Two years of field work, a third year of documentary analysis, and two more years of analysis, interpretation and writing allowed me to map out shared societal beliefs, Ortega government beliefs, and individual teacher beliefs regarding values and values education in and out of schooling, as well as other related beliefs about teaching and learning, governance, education, and more. My analysis in schools and classrooms with teachers, students and parents was deepened by understanding beliefs systems that reverberated in and out of the classroom and influenced teachers personally and professionally; these included commonly shared “Nicaraguan” beliefs (e.g., Christian faith, patriotic beliefs) and beliefs raised by the government (e.g., political party identity, Christian faith, patriotic beliefs, beliefs about teaching and learning, beliefs about specific Sandinista values).

⁷ See Appendix A for Spanish

Rural Multigrade Schooling: Answering some Unanswered Questions

Profe Adriana was one of ten core teachers with whom I worked and got to know during two years of participant-observation field work in the San Jose de la Montaña region. This core group of teachers represented a microcosm of the socio-professional world in which multigrade teachers worked in Nicaragua. Though multigrade education is the primary modality of formal schooling for millions of rural children around the world – and only one for most rural Nicaraguan children – it is woefully under-studied and misunderstood. Policy-makers, government officials and educators routinely denounce bad or unmotivated teachers for the rote learning that prevails along with a documented fraction of mandated instructional time. Little is understood from multigrade teachers' perspectives even though the teacher is an expert on her profession. There is little institutional or societal reflection, and virtually no extensive analysis, on the many macro and micro influences that contribute to a country's often sub-standard multigrade education.

In Nicaragua, this ignorance was exacerbated by an historic and institutionalized marginalization and denigration of rural life and schooling. Rather than confirm or deny the veracity of the many aspersions toward multigrade schooling and teachers, this study seeks to understand multigrade teachers and teaching by understanding psycho-social influences on their practice. As studies have shown, rote learning and reduced instructional time was *el pan del dia* in all the multigrade classrooms. In Nicaragua, it became more pronounced in unigrade rural high school. Where I deviated from most existing research was in the analysis and explanation of this trend: I found that many factors contributed to and reinforced how teachers taught in multigrade schools, from teacher experiences as students, teacher preparation, professional development, institutional policies and expectations, curricular materials, and shared societal beliefs. When taken together, these influences provide a much stronger explanatory framework than the standard denouncement of “bad or unmotivated teachers.”

An urgent question aired repeatedly by Central American governments, multi-lateral agencies and development organizations working in education was why teachers continue to use rote, memoristic, purely transmission methods of teaching and learning when the constructivist revolution was introduced in the mid-1990s. The same simplistic answers were repeated time and again: bad and unmotivated teachers, teachers without vocation, teachers

without values. I attempt to answer this question from a different angle: by understanding the combinations of beliefs and knowledge teachers use as they make decisions in their practice.

By design, the key questions I address involve theoretical and applied concerns simultaneously. In Nicaragua, I wanted to learn how teacher knowledge, beliefs and practice interrelate in different and constantly changing contexts. Teachers negotiate a maze of stakeholders, policies, curricular materials, belief systems and knowledge that change each day, each school year, and year after year. Their current belief systems and knowledge – and those swirling around them in the school community, among education officials and policy makers, and embedded in curricular materials (to mention a few) – are rooted in history and future aspirations. Teacher practice emerges in relation to how teachers understand and negotiate these multi-level systems of beliefs and knowledge. Rather than judging if one way is better than another, or defining a single path or combination, I seek to understand the different ways teachers approach and engage these overlapping beliefs in changing contexts and settings.

Values Education: A Foundation of Curricular Transformation

Through my field work, I identified four main areas that, according to teachers and MINED officials, comprised the bulk of a teacher's work: values education, plans and planning, math and language arts. I sought to understand relationships among belief systems, knowledge, knowledge gaps and practice in each of these areas before comparing them. Because so little is investigated and known about multigrade teachers' lives and decisions in rural Nicaragua, I struggled with how to address the prototypical qualitative quandary of balancing description and analysis. In my first renditions (drafts), I provided dense description with abundant quotes as a nod to participating teachers and the importance of highlighting their often muted and at times silenced voices combined with an official disinterest in their rich experiences and perspectives. An academic mentor censored this decision, characterizing the text as uninteresting and contributing nothing to scholarly understandings (and admitting she had not read it). I struggled to combine sufficient description with analysis that leaves room for readers to make their own conclusions, ideas and possibilities from the data, description and analysis I provide. I also divided my work into four separate studies (on values education, planning and instructional time, math and language arts) to provide justice to this description-analysis combination.

This study, then, is the first of the four I mention above. It looks exclusively at the fundamental component of the Ortega government's curricular transformation: Sandinista values education. Values gave relevance to academic content and helped ensure students graduated with a commitment to their community and the nation. Values also were instrumental in encouraging adult family members to benefit from government projects and join government campaigns to restore rights and work together towards a better future.

To understand teacher practice in relation to values education, four questions guided my work. How did teachers understand and assess teaching values? How did they understand and facilitate student learning of values? How did they distinguish or assess when student learning of values was happening or not? How did teachers use and communicate these understandings? As I came to understand teacher understandings and practices, I found that their individual beliefs and knowledge in the present were tightly related with societal and institutional beliefs and knowledge about values. I had to examine how teachers understood these "other" beliefs and belief systems that some teachers shared, some rejected and almost all negotiated when they received values orientations from government officials. These negotiations were critical to how teachers decided if and how to implement mandated values lessons and activities throughout the school year.

Beginning the Research: Positioning the Researcher

The idea for this study grew out of my life in Central America during the war in El Salvador, its reconstruction after the U.N.-negotiated Peace Accords, and my work with urban and rural teachers since that time. The teachers, students and families with whom I worked for more than 20 years formed me and contributed to who I am as a mother, partner, woman, teacher, researcher, educational psychologist, and community member. Miller-Cleary (2013) writes about hybridity in one's identities and hybrid border crossers, describing people who learn to negotiate combinations of identities they develop as actors in different cultural settings or sub-cultures within one mainstream culture. Through my life in the U.S. and Central America, in and out of academia, I have developed a hybridity that helps me survive and thrive. In academia, I draw upon my commitment and guiding faith in community, organization, struggle, and social justice (not mainstream academic values) to guide my research, service and teaching. My spiritual commitment to walk with the poor as we make change together, inside and out, in small ways and on larger stages, guides

everything I do. In the next section, I explain this positionality and how it evolved in Nicaragua.

My Positionality as Interactive Repositionings

I use my numerous vantage points or “bundles of identities” (Miller-Cleary, 2013) as complementary resources that influence each research design, how I think and act in different settings, the relationships I form in addition to how they form, their quality, length and purposes. They also influence the relationships I do not pursue. In most qualitative work, the researcher is the principal instrument and multiple positionalities contribute to the meanings I co-create with participants and documentary data. But they do not act alone. My personal positioning is proportionate and enmeshed with positionalities people externally prescribe upon and about me, my work and my family. For this study, the interdependence among myself, the Nicaraguans with whom I interacted daily, and my academic mentors was critical to the relationships I pursued and developed (and those I did not), as well as the meanings and understandings I developed over time and wrote about in this study.

I want to underscore several lessons I have learned from my hybridity. I act from a belief that each of us is culturally formed and socialized in an ongoing and never-ending process. Hybridity endows me with a constant reminder and awe that there are many ways to understand the same thing. This contributes to my interest in contextual nuances over universal truths, the latter proudly disconnected from culture, history and local or indigenous knowledge. It guides my interest in competing narratives and nuances in people’s shared beliefs, knowledge and behaviors.

My hybridity informs my belief that context not only matters, it is indispensable to all human meaning making – including teaching, learning and research. Context – including physical settings, actors and an array of often conflicting and overlapping psycho-social beliefs and knowledge – is an essential part of how we create meaning, using language, interactions and relationships. Hybridity allows me to negotiate identities to celebrate, grieve, think, work and otherwise live in distinct contexts (and cultures) – including knowing how and when to bridge, separate or particularize identities and beliefs. It guides me in placing context front and center to understand cognitions in relation to actions.¹

Hybridity is a blessing that helps me see and appreciate differences, and act accordingly. It helps me to embrace how continuity and discontinuity live side by side, how

coherence is often riddled with contradictions, and even contributes to them. It has allowed me to see, for example, how efforts to homogenize often rely on differentiation and marginalization in the name of homogenization. Hybridity also helps me evaluate how who I am and how I think, believe and act changes over time. It has helped me learn through listening, observing, thinking; through interaction, communication and reflection, and mostly self-reflection. This has segued seamlessly into qualitative research and ethnography. It also has convinced me to never try to speak for others.

Taken together, all these lessons and consequences of hybridity remind me I cannot ignore, simplify or devalue context, and that multiple perspectives provide insights otherwise untapped. Below, I provide several examples of my positionality that were particularly salient to this final product. I follow each with a brief description of interrelated positionalities by others, which I call repositionings. I leave a full discussion of the reciprocity among one's positionalities with external repositionings by others to a separate forum.

Position #1: I am a learner. My primary position in this study was as a learner. I sought to co-construct meaning with those around me, focusing on their words, feelings, and understandings. I collected data from multiple sources in an effort to understand the many perspectives swirling around multigrade teaching and learning, perspectives that contributed to individual teacher beliefs and knowledge and how teachers used different combinations of these in their practice. My conscious positioning as a learner in most aspects of my life began first as a survival skill before becoming a way of living, teaching, and researching. For this study, my learner stance helped me survive and maneuver complicated and often overwhelming environments. As a learner, I constantly gave thanks for the unprecedented opportunity Nicaraguan teachers and community residents gave me to learn more about the myriad challenges teachers (and students) face in classrooms throughout Central America. These were similar to challenges I faced for years in Salvadoran classrooms with teachers and MINED officials – and never had the time to analyze and fully understand. As a learner, I was able to look forward to working in classrooms each day despite challenges that regularly tested my skills and ability to persist. With this incredible learning opportunity, I hoped my research in Nicaragua, with my experience in El Salvador, could contribute to national and international conversations about education challenges in Central America.

From a vantage point as a learner, I also knew this study could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of education in different countries, including U.S. schools,ⁱⁱ because my attempt to understand formal teaching-learning processes by examining relationships among teacher knowledge, beliefs and practice can be beneficial across borders and school systems.

Repositioning: La Gringuita is a teacher. All the teachers and family members who participated in this study positioned me as a teacher rather than a learner. In Chapter 3 I describe my roles as participant observer in classrooms, and how no teacher allowed me the luxury of straight observation for more than one day. When I lived in San Juan and Los Coquitos, my neighbors identified me as a visiting teacher, and many asked me to stay. When I stopped visiting Los Coquitos school, dozens of parents asked me why I no longer taught there. When I wrote notes in children's notebooks when they had a particularly good day, mothers sought me out to tell me how much they appreciated my teaching their children at school. Many who knew I taught in El Salvador and the U.S. asked questions about differences between their school system and those in the other two countries. My traveling teacher status held more strongly for most people who came to know me than my insistence that I was there to learn about their education system and teacher experiences. This repositioning was related to a lack of knowledge regarding research and educational psychology, a positioning I look at next.

Position #2: I am an educational psychologist. I approached this study from the position of being a U.S.-trained educational psychologist and researcher. This simultaneously helped and hindered my first year of work with Nicaraguan teachers. In the first months of my classroom observations, I found myself struggling with inner conflicts stemming from my focus on what I was not seeing and hearing combined with the violence and chaos that was part of every school day. I heard an inner voice reciting what I believed to be true about motivation, best practices, classroom management and learning-centered environments. I left my five-hour visits feeling overwhelmed and disheartened more often than not, and worked to turn those feelings into the quest for understanding from each teacher's perspective. Physiological reactions included headaches (most teachers complained of regular headaches), stomach issues, chronic exhaustion and, less frequently, shaking/trembling. My torment came mostly from the incredible lost potential I witnessed, the many missed learning/teaching opportunities, and how students were systematically marginalized and virtually condemned

to another generation of functional illiteracy and poverty by the very system that proposed their self-development. I learned that I needed time-outs from the classroom to ponder, write (more than field notes), and simply meditate to regain my strength and return to the classrooms. Everyone around me – teachers, students and parents – reminded me that these classroom environments were normal and expected. This helped me remember that my mission was to understand that belief and so many others that had nothing to do with my own.

When my beliefs and knowledge began to muddle my mission I developed a sort of internal buzzer to remind myself: you are here to understand the multigrade classrooms from teachers' perspectives around their practice. I trained myself to ask a constant question, “Why does the teacher feel she needs to act/interact this way?” and “What does she say and why” or with those people and not others. I learned to catch myself as I imposed my own teacher, educational psychology, and justice frames of reference on what I saw and observed among teachers, PD facilitators, and government officials. Some days were more difficult than others. When I observed what I perceived to be unethical interactions during data collection, I sometimes discarded my participant-observer role and intervened as Tenley, educator, mother, parent, human being. Though I will not report these ethnical issues publicly,ⁱⁱⁱ they contributed to my understandings. And when I analyzed these moments, my primary role as learner prevailed: I asked what can I learn from these interactions rather than judge those involved.^{iv} The more I practiced this positioning, the easier it became.

Repositioning: She is a gringa from a U.S. university. I soon realized that one of the many things I needed to understand about Nicaragua was the ramifications of most people knowing little about research. Some dismissed research as imperialist, others as scientific without values. I learned how to conduct more responsible research in this context than the U.S.-IRB process that systematically disrespected local norms in multiple ways. For example, the UNM IRB refused a waiver of signed consent and mocked a suggestion to respect local decision-making mechanisms. It insisted instead on individual consent and thumb prints with a third party signatory acting as witness. This proved humiliating to some parents while angering others. It ignored and devalued the Nicaraguan emphasis on community over individual decision-making, and provided one more example of “Yanqui imperialism” (and U.S. interference) in Nicaragua. The IRB’s insistence on child assent

actively disparaged Nicaraguan parental authority and normal adult-child interactions in which the adult is in charge. Its primordial assumption embedded in every procedure that potential participants, young and old, understand research enough to consent or decline was severely faulty.

In Nicaragua, a tiny intellectual minority of Nicaraguans based in Managua (who studied mostly in Europe) knew about research. Fewer used it – notably not the government. Most research was done by multilateral agencies about policy, and pointed to the many deficits Nicaragua suffers being the second poorest country in Latin America. The government collected loads of data, but rarely disseminated it publicly. This caused some (mostly in the opposition) to question if the GRUN was unable or unwilling to analyze and use the data it collected. It was an important question because the few times the MINED cited percentages they were either inaccurate (when original numbers were provided) or rounded (up most likely with no data to verify the tabulations).

In this context, my constant note-taking and questioning was something the Gringuita did for something at her university. People were interested in what I was doing, what I was finding, and why I was doing it, but among the teachers no one had heard of a doctorate and several were much more impressed with my masters than my pursuit of a higher degree. In response to this repositioning of myself as researcher, I developed extra consent check-ins with teachers and family members that included regular reminders that I was collecting data, and that they could say no to my requests for information or observation time at any time with no repercussions. My visits and work in schools would continue no matter what. This repositioning spurred my efforts to respect how knowledge in local populations is part of intricate belief systems and experiences that academia may not understand or recognize, or judge as ineffective, uneducated or irrelevant.

Position #3: Liberation struggles build solidarity, shared understandings. This third position and repositioning requires more background and information than the previous ones, mostly because it falls outside any norm of U.S. culture and experience. It is based in something fundamental to Nicaraguan and Salvadoran realities: how liberation struggles and war change every person involved while changing an entire nation. Most Latin American countries have a healthy aversion to war after surviving dictatorships and civil wars that have ravaged their respective countries and personally touched every family. The U.S. wages and

funds many wars, none on its own soil in decades, and none in conjunction with one of the most powerful nations on earth. That experience has personal effects (and positionings) that I will describe briefly below (I add information to endnotes for readers interested in more details).

For much of my twenties, I supported a citizen's movement in El Salvador that sought to create a new El Salvador in the midst of brutal repression by a death squad oligarchy. At first, my role was to raise funds for the unarmed movement in coordination with several U.S. organizations fighting our government's enabling of indiscriminate repression against civilians, including priests, U.S. and Salvadoran religious sisters, and thousands more. I worked first from San Francisco (five years) in the largest movement in the U.S. in the 1980s – in solidarity with the people of Central America. As U.N. brokered negotiations and each side moved slowly towards ending the war, I moved to San Salvador to open an office for the same U.S. agency, funding and reporting on self-development efforts in urban and rural communities, supporting institution-strengthening in non-governmental organizations, and consulting on municipal and microregional (multiple municipalities) projects. As reconstruction ended, I moved into a coastal ex-war zone with 14 communities of mostly ex-combatants. I worked in adult education and then elementary schools in three ex-war zones in rural El Salvador, living in the coast and a northern region for the following eight years.

This experience of close to twenty years – plus the five years of professional development with Salvadoran teachers that I continued annually while in the U.S. – helped me understand many aspects of Nicaragua's revolutionary history and Ortega's remolded "Christian, Socialist, Solidarity" revolution. At the same time, since each country's revolutionary ideological foundations, actors and histories are different,^v the Salvadoran experience – including the beliefs and knowledge it helped me form – acted like blinders as I tried to understand Nicaraguans' unique experiences. I learned how to identify when my perspective interfered and how to rein it in, how to use my cross-cultural hybridity as an asset and stop when it became a liability.

For example, in El Salvador I lived and worked mostly in rural communities. I came to know the joys, sorrows, challenges and advantages of living in small, relatively isolated communities where the greatest resource was *convivencia*, living in community and relying

on your neighbor. This experience contributed to my insistence on working in rural multigrade schools in Nicaragua and the ease with which our family lived in rural Nicaraguan settings. At the same time, my rural life in El Salvador did not prepare me for differences I found in central Nicaragua. In El Salvador, I identified and unlearned ignorant (U.S.-based) stereotypes against “illiterate” adults. I developed a deep respect for each person’s intellectual capacities and myriad knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs as I worked with adults who had little to no formal schooling. This experience did not prepare me for the Nicaraguan belief that a person who does not know how to read, write or do basic math is “nobody” and one who does is “somebody.” Historically, Nicaragua’s intellectual elite has held powerful sway in politics (right, left and center) along with Catholic Church leaders. Sandino and many Sandinista leaders grew out of a tiny intellectual class and a formally schooled urban population. El Salvador’s revolutionaries, on the other hand, came mostly from rural areas where most people never had the opportunity to attend school or learn to read or write due to the war and oligarchic leaders. Illiterate Salvadorans are a product of the country’s history, period.

As I learned about Ortega’s history, I shared some of the constant questioning by opposition figures of his motives and commitment to create the equitable society he professed to seek. I knew some of this came from my experiences in El Salvador. As I analyzed government documents more carefully once out of the field, I began to feel more echoes from my experiences in El Salvador than clashes. For example, my experiences in El Salvador changed who I am, how I think, what I believe, and how I act – exactly what First Lady Murillo professed to want to accomplish through her Campaign, “Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well!” How the government attempted to implement personal transformations was completely different from Salvadoran ways, but some foundational ideas were quite similar. Below, I describe several of the personal transformations important to this study.

Societal change builds on personal transformation, and war changes everything. In El Salvador, I transformed personally by actively participating (what Ortega called “protagonism”) with others in a grassroots movement built on the idea that change required a prolonged struggle at local, regional and national levels. This transformation was not intellectual and it could never be learned in a book or at school. It was experiential and

wholly social, based on life and death (literally), hope and faith in humanity, working together and other shared values. This work contrasted with the militarized setting around us in which powerful leaders used soldiers and death squads to terrorize and silence people, particularly those who spoke out against the status quo and created viable alternatives against all the odds. Leaders and participants alike were targeted for torture and disappearance, usually death. Thousands were displaced from their homes, treated worse than domesticated animals, and yet they not only maintained their hope and faith, they continued their arduous work in the face of death. I had never experienced anything close to that reality in the U.S. The experience was similar in Nicaragua, before and during the Sandinista revolution in the 1980s.

I learned several things through the war and these transformational experiences that are important to this study. I learned about terror and the powerlessness one feels in the face of institutionalized government repression and brutality. I worked with many people who had overcome that terror, changed it to conviction and the unwavering decision to not be silent and to show an alternative was possible by building it in the midst of war. I learned how empowerment was tied to maintaining one's dignity in the midst of many indignities, and what it meant when someone tried to take your dignity away from you. I learned about risking one's own life while kindling a collective ideal – and never losing hope. I saw how responding to inhumanity, hatred and violent insanity with hope, love, faith, resistance and action lay at the heart of personal, family and societal transformation. I came to know the power of revolutionary mysticism, a spiritual understanding and sentiment that motivates the transformations and actions I describe above. Not only do I know that these things are unknown to most U.S. citizens, I know they are deemed unscientific and not worthy of including in education research. I also recognize many of these experiences and values in Ortega's policies, projects and campaigns – and in many Central American teachers' lives.

I also understood how U.S. leaders (and citizens) used a patriotic veneer of righteousness, human rights and democracy, and simplistic anti-communist rhetoric, to justify U.S. funding and other assistance in the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians south of our border. None were U.S. citizens and most did not speak English. In sharp contrast to falsehoods espoused in U.S. rhetoric and discourse, people's crimes lay in their refusal to be marginalized and impoverished for one more generation, to

be constantly sick and dying early deaths for wealthy landowners who served U.S. interests. They refused to contemplate their children suffering the same indignities to serve U.S. geopolitical and economic interests. I saw how difficult it was for most U.S. citizens to believe that their country, and each of them through their tax dollars, was contributing to this slaughter.^{vi} U.S. citizens have no experience with national government repression that ignites resistance, mass near-death experiences that empower a movement – and its individual actors – to take ever bolder actions, or how protracted solidarity with others overcomes fear. Few know of the almost inhuman strength, vision and grace that comes out of repression, or how when a government kills a leader in a liberation movement that repressive action sparks hundreds and even thousands to become empowered or re-commit to continue the struggle for the common good. Nicaraguans understood these actions and interactions. They hold America and Americans responsible for their collective and individual traumas, and they cite the nefarious imperialist history in their school curriculum, in the privacy of their homes, on street corners and during bus rides.

Finally, Nicaraguans and Salvadorans know the power of historic memory and never forgetting those who lost their lives to make a better future, the brutality of marginalization and repression, or the power of liberation and organization in its stead. Again, there is nothing as visceral or heartfelt in U.S. experiences, despite the large U.S. role in these experiences. Historic memory and commemorations are both a survival response to government repression against its citizenry and the many official lies told and a reminder to all that it can never happen again. Remembering is about giving voice and justice for those killed and silenced, finding inspiration for those who remain, and keeping the vision of a better future alive. It's about respecting the long struggle and many sacrifices along the way in one's own body, mind and soul. People who have not experienced these things have no compass or map on which to understand them, no way to feel the lifelong and profoundly deep impacts these experiences have on every person and an entire nation. This makes it easy to dismiss or deem them irrelevant, to misname them political shenanigans, or mock them as unnecessary – and not feel any responsibility. It makes it easy for researchers without these experiences to assume they are unnecessary to understand.

Researching in “Unstable Places” (Greenhouse, Mertz & Warren, 2002) or “Violently Divided Societies” (Smyth & Robinson, 2001) requires positioning and understandings of

these contexts. They often conflict with academia's judgments about what is researchable, or what constitutes scientific and thus valuable beliefs and knowledge. They are also out of reach for many who have not experienced them. The lesson here is that they are integral to Central American life, teachers and education – and they are integral to this researcher. I include them in this study.

Repositioning: “Yanqui empire,” “Yanqui imperialism” and “the family of gringos.” My son and his father were both born in El Salvador and speak Spanish as their first and preferred language. My husband fought all 12 years in the Salvadoran civil war, a liberation struggle that occurred during the same decade as its sister revolution by the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. These identities and experiences were trumped in no uncertain terms by my presence in our family. With one Gringa, the three of us became the gringo family.

As a family, we suffered fairly steady harassment by government officials and some neighbors who regularly voiced anti-gringo sentiments. This was in line with a general rejection by Nicaraguans of what they and Ortega called “the Yanqui empire” and “Yanqui imperialism” that they were sure had kept Nicaragua in poverty since the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. I knew some of U.S. history in Nicaragua before beginning the study, and came to understand and feel it more deeply while collecting and analyzing data in the field^{vii} and even more once back in the U.S. doing more detailed analyses.

A Spanish-language Study Translated into Mostly an English-language Text

I collected data during this study in Spanish, did ongoing analysis in Spanish and English, and wrote the final products in English. This bilingual effort requires some notes and resources for readers, including an explanation regarding Spanish translations, the use of certain Spanish words in the text, a list of Spanish acronyms, and other language decisions I made in an effort to ease the English reader. A reader's guide follows.

A Reader's Guide to this Study

I collected data in Spanish with some fieldnotes sprinkled with my English shorthand. I analyzed most of my data in Spanish (with very few translations), and wrote in Spanish and English. Using the enormous amount of data I collected (and generated) from almost 150 days of classroom and teacher PD observations, over 30 hours of interviews and many dozens more of informal conversations, and over 1800 articles and primary source documents, I wrote this document with a nod to my mostly monolingual English-speaking

committee members, my immediate audience. Below, I explain my translation decisions and other guideposts for readers.

Translations in footnotes. This is an English-language dissertation for a mostly monolingual dissertation committee. For this document, I translated quotations from participants and documents from Spanish to English. I then had a bilingual speaker whose first language is Spanish review my translations. Since translations rely on multiple levels of meaning and context, they are rarely literal. Some words carry several possible meanings or translations. I infrequently added a synonym for this kind of word in the translated English text in parentheses. For words that require more explanation, I provide one in the text (e.g., *sensibilizar*, *convivir*) and in the glossary at the end of the document. For the most part, I placed the original Spanish in a footnote on the same page on which the English translation appears in the text. Due to space limitations, I placed extensive original Spanish quotations in appendices with a footnote to indicate their exact location.

My English translations rarely include “ums,” pauses or repetition unless these were integral to the meaning of conversation content. These sounds and repetitions ubiquitous in natural speech often distract readers from the person’s message when on the written page. I made these edits to help readers focus on the content of what people said, making as few changes as possible.

Paraphrasing. In certain situations and for several different reasons, I paraphrased what people said. While I taught, while I observed certain moments during PD, and while in informal conversations, I rarely took word-for-word notes. I used jottings. During recess, PD breaks or immediately after a conversation, I expanded on my jottings. I also paraphrased common ideas and phrases to call attention to their generality in society or among a certain population (e.g., teachers, Sandinista leaders). I paraphrased teacher critiques of the government when I could not find a public critique to represent the private one. This was one way to protect the identity of the teacher. I also paraphrased when I had long or disjointed explanations that were not confusing to me (because of our many conversations) but that did not provide a concise quotation that would be understandable to most readers. Though some researchers (including one academic mentor) are dismissive of paraphrasing, I found it necessary and helpful – and in no way affected the findings of this study.

Spanish words in the English text. I italicized Spanish words that I kept in the English text. These words have no literal translations and their descriptive translations cannot be repeated each time they appear. They often represent complex concepts that have few English equivalents, like *convivencia* and *sensibilizacion*. They may also have no English equivalent, like *Danielista* or *Orteguista*. Other words like *orientacion* appear as the translation of orientation because it straddled two meanings: order (from above) and orientation.

Quotations. I delineated three kind of quotations described below.

- 1) Quotations from documents are indented with the same spacing as the rest of the text, and they are not italicized.
- 2) Quotations from classroom observation field notes, interview transcripts and informal conversations directly with me are indented with single spacing, and are not italicized.
- 3) Excerpts from field notes are indented with single spacing, and are italicized.

Endnotes. I placed extra information – extensions of analyses, additional examples and citations – in endnotes for each chapter.

Spanish-English glossary. I added a glossary at the end of this document to aid the monolingual English reader.

Acronym listing. Because people use acronyms liberally in Nicaragua (and El Salvador), I do so in this text. I provided a list of acronyms before this chapter for easy access to their Spanish meaning and English translation.

An introduction, three sections, and a conclusion. I divided the presentation of this study into three sections or parts, each with their own brief introduction. Part One (chapters 2 and 3) describes theoretical and methodological frameworks that guided me in my research design, data collection and analysis in the field, and out-of-field analysis, interpretation and writing. Part Two (chapters 4, 5 and 6) describes and analyzes overlapping macro contexts that affected and influenced participating teachers on a daily basis, from the government and Ministry of Education. This is part of my ethnographic effort to understand the government and its beliefs, knowledge and practices – and how these related with those of classroom teachers. As part of this broad psycho-social setting in which teachers worked, I include descriptions of several socio-professional and physical settings as well. The majority of the

data presented in this section is documentary, with observations, interviews, conversations and artifacts informing the analysis.

Part Three (chapters 7, 8, and 9) describes relationships among societal, institutional and individual beliefs and knowledge as they related with teacher practice specific to values and the government's values education. This section is the complementary ethnographic effort that focuses on individual teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice. It is rich with school and classroom data – a more traditional ethnographic presentation.

The tenth and final chapter is the Conclusion. Here, I bring together the findings from the parallel ethnographies to celebrate the knowledge gained through this psycho-social emphasis of overlapping beliefs systems and how teachers use them over time in different combinations. I also briefly look at practical implications for professional development.

PART ONE

In the introduction chapter, I provided several overall themes in the study as well as my positionings and repositionings in Nicaragua. In the following two chapters, I provide theoretical arguments and methodological information. In chapter two, I use existing literature to explain my argument for this study: that we know little about how teachers use their beliefs and knowledge in their daily practice as education policies, curriculum, teachers themselves, their students and the content change over time. This is particularly true in multigrade classrooms. In Central America, centralized governments and Ministries of Education make it imperative to understand how teachers use their beliefs and knowledge to both understand official beliefs and knowledge embedded in curriculum and policy, and decide how to act upon these.

The paucity of research in multigrade schooling makes understanding of these overlapping contexts, beliefs and knowledge systems, and teacher practice even more difficult. I also use literature on teacher beliefs and knowledge to identify gaps in understanding how teachers flexibly use belief systems and knowledge – their own, those they share with others, and those imposed on them by education policy, curriculum and programs – to make decisions in their practice. The literature points to a need to study teachers beliefs-knowledge-practice relationships not only in changing micro contexts of classrooms and schools, but also in changing macro contexts including national policy, curriculum, national content standards, and district/federal mandates or programs.

In chapter three, I argue that I can best understand the complex and constantly changing relationships among teacher and institutional beliefs systems, knowledge and practice through ethnography. Dedicating an extended time in multigrade classrooms leads to relationships with teachers, students, families, and government officials that generate trust and joint efforts to co-construct understandings. My ethnographic approach provided numerous opportunities to understand teacher reasoning underlying their practice from a psycho-social perspective using a socio-cognitive and socio-cultural frame. Hundreds of hours of classroom and PD participant observation, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews; hundreds of primary and secondary documents; and dozens of classroom and community artifacts allowed me to map out societal, institutional and individual teacher beliefs systems, including indigenous or local knowledge, and how these

related with each other and with teacher planning, instruction of values education, and government discourse, beliefs, knowledge, procedures, and mandates. I detail how my ethnographic approach complements what we know from the predominant input-output research in teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice.

These two chapters are geared towards academic readers interested in a dicussions of theoretical concepts and methodological decisions that guided my design and methods. I recommend to readers not interested in these aspects to skip to Part Two and Chapter Four.

Chapter Two

Teacher Beliefs, Knowledge and Practice in Multiple Contexts: A Literature Review

In school, the teacher is one of the main influences on student learning (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Nye, Konstantanopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). Research provides lists of essential knowledge, beliefs and teacher practices that combine to create “effective teaching” across classrooms and contexts (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008; Danielson, 2007). Despite decades of research that have produced numerous teacher knowledge, learning and motivation models, much less is known about how teacher beliefs and knowledge systems relate with practice in changing micro and macro contexts.

In the last two decades, education reforms in math, science and language arts combined with increasing policy interest in teacher evaluations, spawned renewed attention on teacher effectiveness. Danielson’s effective teaching framework (2007) identifies 22 components with 76 “minor elements” grouped into four domains: planning and preparation, the school environment, instruction and professional responsibilities. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) defines four similar domains in its ten “inTASC Model Core Teaching Standards” (2011): the learner and learning, content knowledge, instructional practice and professional responsibility (p. 1). The research and ensuing frameworks capture a “generic” (Danielson, 2014) body of knowledge, skills and beliefs all teachers should possess; they do not capture how, when and why teachers enact different sets of knowledge and beliefs in conjunction with external constraints and assets that are an integral part of their daily practice.

In this chapter I discuss four areas of research that contribute to understanding how rural Nicaraguan teachers mediated shared and individual knowledge and beliefs with those of the Ministry of Education (MINED) and the Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega, and how these related with several micro and macro factors related to schooling. The four research areas are:

- 1) Teacher beliefs and knowledge
- 2) Teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice within micro contexts
- 3) Teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice within macro contexts
- 4) Multigrade schools and schooling

In this study, I looked at how Nicaraguan teachers' beliefs and knowledge regarding teaching and learning, instructional planning, values education, math, and language arts related with their practice. I approached these relationships as embedded within bigger micro and macro contexts that Nicaraguan teachers and MINED officials pointed to as not only ubiquitous in Nicaraguan schooling but as playing critical roles in classroom teaching and learning. These included MINED policies and discourse regarding planning and assessment, the national curriculum, Sandinista government values, and material resources available. The four areas of research highlighted in this chapter provide a foundation on which to build contextualized understandings of these relationships from socio-cultural and socio-cognitive perspectives. In this review, I highlight gaps in the literature, discuss limitations in methods and explain how this study attends to some of these. Below, I begin by clarifying definitions and assumptions guiding this work.

Definitions and Assumptions

I define learning for this study with the following assumptions. First, learning occurs in multiple ways to create a relatively permanent change in behavior and cognitive structures (Shell et al., 2010); behavior includes language and communication, while cognitive structures include knowledge and beliefs. Second, learning occurs through interactions in which participants use cultural tools including language and ways of communicating (Cazden, 2001; Hymes, 1972; Saville-Troike, 1989), and create artifacts individually and together (McCurdy, Spradley & Shandy, 2005). Third, learning occurs in a highly complex and changing system of systems that is “a network of overlapping relationships that exist simultaneously” (Fogel et al., 2008, p. 238) and mutually inform each other. In the formal classroom, these include elements within the following three systems:

- 1) *Intrapersonal* systems of teacher and student knowledge and beliefs as they relate to behavior;
- 2) *Interpersonal* systems of peer and teacher relationships within the classroom and school; and
- 3) *Socio-cultural* systems of “relationships within and between groups of people who share intersecting histories” (Fogel et al., 2008, p. 238), current events, future projections and discourse. This includes systems of beliefs and knowledge that define and are defined by education policies, curriculum and mandates.

These three overlapping systems mutually and simultaneously influence each other, and help explain how “learning is driven by what teachers and pupils do in classrooms” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 140). Relationships among a teacher’s intrapersonal systems of knowledge and beliefs, interpersonal interactions in the classroom and school, and external demands and resources help one understand and explain why teachers do what they do, and when and how they do it. Documenting changing and continuous internal cognitions and external factors requires understanding how historical events and discourse (Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983) influence the present as well as future ideals or projections.

Most of the research cited in this review is limited to K-12 classrooms and undergraduate college populations in North America and Europe. Even though it is conducted in the North, this research is widely used in Central American curriculum development and education reforms funded by U.S. and Spanish international development agencies, and multilateral agencies like the World Bank (Reimers et al., 1995; Asensio Flórez, 2011). The paucity of research from Nicaragua included in this review stems from two factors: there is little published data or research in Nicaragua and the majority of education research published measures policy-related indicators or evaluates programs funded by multilateral agencies (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997). Education research done by Central American researchers in Spanish outside a policy or program evaluation emphasis has few outlets for publication (personal correspondence, Schadl, 2016).

This study responds to calls to understand relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice in ways that are content specific and context dependent. This approach mirrors teacher decision-making processes and how teachers use different parts of their beliefs systems and knowledge to filter external demands, restrictions and affordances as they teach each school day. Understandings that embrace this complexity will provide important new knowledge to “effective teacher” listings, generic frameworks and evolving theoretical models. Systematic field work in schools and classrooms over extended periods of time allow researchers to not only understand psycho-social relationships and interactions in a classroom and school, but also how these are affected by larger political and socio-economic contexts in which schooling and teachers operate. These understandings can also contribute to urgent conversations and efforts across Central America about how to strengthen fragile public education systems.

An ethnographic approach implies a focus on culture. I defined culture in this study as a constantly evolving system of knowledge, beliefs, and ways of thinking, knowing, acting, interacting, speaking and communicating that are learned socially as people make sense of their surroundings together and individually (McCurdy, Spradley, & Shandy, 2005). This evolving system informed and was informed by behaviors over time as people interpreted what they experienced. Culture, then, can be understood through people's behavior, including their discourse, their participation in and perception of interactions and events, and the objects or artifacts they create individually or together (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; McCurdy, Spradley, & Shandy, 2005; Orellana & Bowman, 2003).

Teacher Beliefs and Knowledge

Educational psychologists tend to define teacher beliefs and knowledge as separate constructs that are defined by component characteristics and fit into categories or types. Some research analyzes relationships among and between beliefs and knowledge while separating them as distinct constructs. Other researchers argue that knowledge is a kind of shared, societal belief and that the two are one and the same. I briefly introduce these construct framings below before looking closely at research on teacher beliefs followed by research on teacher knowledge to then bring the research together on how beliefs and knowledge relate with teacher practice.

Educational psychology often frames beliefs as synonymous with motivation. Motivation models define certain beliefs, describe how they develop or change, and frame hypothesized cognitive relationships among a small set of beliefs or with learning (or teaching) behaviors. Another body of research analyzes teacher beliefs about content, pedagogy, teacher identities, and students. Approaches tend to link beliefs to teacher practice and even more distally to student learning. Beliefs and knowledge are both defined as cognitive representations rooted in an individual's cultural understandings, values, events and artifacts (Kagan, 1992; Zanting et al., 2003). They are often closely related, even inseparable.

Teacher knowledge falls within two broad categories (content and general pedagogical knowledge) and four overall types (declarative, procedural, conditional and metacognitive). Common distinctions between beliefs and knowledge use terms like "subjective" and "objective," or "truths" and personal judgments, respectively (Pajares, 1992). Rather than solid truths, objectively correct answers, or a universal professional

consensus, formal schooling knowledge is based on a society's or "larger" community's shared opinion (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Kagan, 1992). Douglas & Wykowski (2011) define knowledge as "justified true belief" (p. 23) while Kagan (1992) asserts that "most of a teacher's professional knowledge can be regarded more accurately as belief ... considering that knowledge is generally regarded as belief that has been affirmed as true on the basis of objective proof or consensus of opinion" (p. 73).

Since a "larger community" provides "external verification" or "warrants for truth" (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 476) to define knowledge and beliefs, in this study I used situated and culturally-defined meanings as I understood them from multiple actors. The "larger community" included the government and Sandinista Party that messaged through coordinated slogans, campaigns and programs with the public as well as constant orientations with teachers. The "larger community" included shared societal beliefs that I gleaned from multiple conversations with Nicaraguans from different walks of life, the media, and teacher and family participants. The "larger community" of teachers included 57 educators with whom I had regular contact in 2013, MINED officials and MINED documents that together provided "warrants for truth" about the education system and teaching profession.

A large body of research shows inter-related systems of beliefs having varying levels of congruence and influence on behavior (more on this ahead). In the following section, I analyze literature on teacher beliefs and the systems they form, in general and in relation to teachers and teaching. I define key terms and contextualize themes as they relate to the current study.

Beliefs in education and teachers' beliefs specifically. Education research has defined multiple kinds of beliefs, including beliefs about content, pedagogy, learners, and teaching- learning processes. Characteristics include implicit (unconscious) or explicit, stable or dynamic, separate from knowledge or related, and situated by contexts or resilient across contexts. From one's first social interactions and experiences, people begin to form networks of beliefs and knowledge. As they connect related information and concepts (knowledge), experiences, values and attitudes, networks become increasingly complex. People use and adapt these connected systems to perceive and make sense of new experiences and information.

It is widely agreed that people develop and use shared and individual beliefs and knowledge regarding education, teaching and learning as well as specific schooling content learned over years as students in primary and secondary grades. Pre-service teachers use their unique networks to filter and frame information during their teacher preparation. Classroom teachers draw upon their beliefs and knowledge networks to guide their practice during daily interactions with students, colleagues, and school administrators. They use their beliefs to filter and guide decisions regarding how to enact curricular resources, school policies and district mandates. Some teacher beliefs and knowledge are independent from one another – when they concern unrelated issues, for example – while others are linked through individual or shared sub-networks, hierarchies of generality and specificity, or influence (McAlpine, Eriks-Brophy, & Crago, 1996).

Teacher beliefs are thought to influence and are influenced by knowledge in bi-directional relationships. Beliefs guide how teachers use their knowledge and how they learn. Knowledge affects a teacher's beliefs in their abilities to achieve a domain-related task (efficacy) and how she perceives that task, i.e., as valuable, important, interesting or costly. They also relate with teacher behaviors. Beliefs and knowledge influence if and when a teachers acts and how she behaves: if she persists when a task gets difficult, takes responsibility for failure, experiments with new strategies or methods, and uses her knowledge and skills more flexibly or rigidly. Beliefs and knowledge work closely together to filter contextual information and guide decision-making in planning, pedagogy, interactions with different learners, and assessments of learning.

We know that beliefs are stable or changing depending on how embedded they are in a person's belief *systems*, defined as complex webs of cognitive representations built over time (Pajares, 1992). Newly formed beliefs appear to be relatively malleable while beliefs formed over an extended period of time are believed to become stable and highly resistant to change (Errington, 2004; Kagan, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). This presents a challenge for teachers who develop stable belief systems about teaching and learning throughout their K-12 years that conflict with new research on effective teaching or educational reforms that require paradigm shifts in content, teaching and learning (Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011; Wang & Odell, 2003).

Despite their permanence and immobility, teacher belief systems change through guided experiences in classrooms as well as reflection in collegial environments (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Wang & Odell, 2003; Xu & Brown, 2016); little is understood, though, regarding the extensive variation in how belief systems change or remain constant. Even less is known about how external factors may convince a teacher to over-ride, de-prioritize or ignore her own beliefs systems as she adapts to her environment. This could make belief systems appear to be stable or changing when really it is a teacher's decisions in how to use their beliefs systems – or only parts of them. This raises a less researched question that is critical to understanding Nicaraguan teacher practice: How do teachers use their beliefs and knowledge to filter and guide their practice in relation to external mandates, curricular materials and other macro factors that may compete or conflict with their internal cognitive systems? Research on whether belief systems are stable or dynamic has not addressed contextually-dependent variation in how teachers use their cognitive systems.

The stable-dynamic distinction of beliefs systems in contexts like Nicaragua may help analyze and answer the nagging question of many administrators, government officials and international agencies that fund education reform: Why do many teachers not embrace and implement constructivist-oriented education reforms? In Nicaragua, the most common answer was that each individual teacher was “unmotivated” and sought what was “easy” and “comfortable”: copy, memorize, and represent text. Do individual stable belief systems play a part in each teacher's continuing use of “traditional” methods? Does lack of motivation and if so, what does that mean? Is the phenomena better understood by examining dynamic relationships among internal cognitions and external factors?

Educational psychology research on teacher knowledge can help begin to answer the questions above, as can research on relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice. Below, I analyze principal findings and how they relate to this study. After looking at general definitions of knowledge, how it develops and how it differs among novices and experts, I turn to literature that links teacher knowledge with teacher practice.

Knowledge in education and teacher knowledge specifically. Research about knowledge in educational psychology tends to view the mind as an individual container that a learner fills with ideas from birth. Knowledge is a measureable commodity that study participants acquire in a predictable often sequential fashion. The learner is perceived as the

controller of the building process and product (Paavola, Lipponen, & Hakkarainen, 2004; Sfard, 1998), joining small units of information to each other as they refine what falls within and outside the parameters of a concept (Zirbel, 2004).

Research has defined four kinds of knowledge: declarative, procedural, conditional and metacognitive. Each is thought to have a fairly linear process of acquisition and solid framework of uses. Declarative knowledge – a major part of every curriculum – includes facts, names, people, places, definitions and rules. Procedural knowledge – how a person uses their declarative knowledge – includes how people use information cognitively and physically to perform certain tasks; it is considered a higher order knowledge than declarative information. Conditional knowledge – when and why a person uses which pieces of declarative and procedural knowledge – is considered higher-order knowledge than the previous two, used with inquiry instruction and solving ill-defined problems. Metacognitive knowledge – of a person’s thinking and learning processes – is critical to developing a large body of learning strategies, using strategies flexibly, setting and monitoring goals, and other self-regulation.

All four kinds of knowledge develop through explicit teaching. They are also culturally-dependent; each society’s “larger community” decides what is relevant declarative knowledge for example, and what is marginalized, actively devalued or simply ignored. Knowledge in a school curriculum is generally highly valued by a society’s “larger community.” Declarative and procedural knowledge comprise the majority of school curricula and teaching-learning processes in classrooms. Even though conditional and metacognitive knowledge have been researched for more than two decades, included in “essential knowledge” frameworks, and taught in many teacher preparation programs, their development and use in K-12 classrooms and higher education varies widely.

Teacher knowledge is divided into over a dozen categories or types that an “effective teacher” should have, that ineffective teachers should aspire to develop, and on which teacher preparation and PD should focus. Content knowledge includes knowledge specific to each discipline as well as instructional methods specific to content. General pedagogical knowledge includes knowledge about teaching and learning, about learners and learner diversity, and classroom management. Over a dozen sub-categories of knowledge have been identified and defined^{viii} (see Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Britzman, 1991; Clandinin &

Connelly, 1998; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Elbaz, 1981; Gholami & Husu, 2010; Grossman, 1990; INTASC, 1992; INTASC, 2001; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1994; Meijer, Verloop & Douwe, 2002; Shulman, 1986; van Driel, Verloop, & De Vos, 1998). Within each area, most teachers possess extensive declarative knowledge and some procedural knowledge. Their conditional and metacognitive knowledge is thought to develop through experience, reflection and PD over time when explicitly included.

Knowledge use is sometimes mapped along a novice to expert continuum which is sequential in both time and knowledge acquisition. Novice learners tend to use examples, experience, and trial and error to learn. They focus mostly on learning declarative knowledge and their “schemas” or networks of information are sparse, loosely connected. Over time, novices build increasingly connected networks of knowledge that they can use to analyze and solve situations and problems – becoming more intermediate learners and practitioners. Experts, on the far end of the continuum, have developed extensive and complex networks of knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking to the point where much of their processing of new information does not require conscious contemplation; it is automatic. This transformation is thought to take at least 5 to 7 years (or 10,000 hours) (Bruning, et al., 2004; Hatano & Oura, 2003; Schunk, 2004). An expert’s use of their metacognitive knowledge is also critical as they monitor and reflect upon learning, change strategies when necessary, and problem solve by understanding a problem from multiple perspectives before planning and taking steps toward any possible solution.

Obidah & Teel (2001) argued that the novice-expert continuum is situational and multi-dimensional. Their research revealed how incorporating cultural ways of knowing, thinking, communicating and interacting into a framework of general characteristics and criteria of a knowledge-beliefs-practice triad can provide new ways of understanding and explaining a domain, trait or area, in this case an expert or novice. Teel, an expert teacher of 25 years, suddenly finds herself a novice after making one contextual change in her practice: she moves from a wealthy white suburban school to a low-income, inner-city school with mostly Black students. Her teaching suffers as does her students’ learning. Obidah, a novice, helps her negotiate through her knowledge-beliefs-practice triad to reflect upon and begin to radically adapt aspects within her expert schemas. Studies like theirs throw new light on existing teacher knowledge and beliefs literature; they also illuminate how different methods

and long-term involvement in the classroom and community provide new understandings regarding the relationship of teacher knowledge and beliefs with practice.

One more area of knowledge research identifies the existence and importance of local or indigenous knowledge (Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006; Conceição & Fagundes Oliveira, 2007). In Nicaragua, people in and out of education separated academic or schooling knowledge from their non-academic and localized knowledge in identification and use of natural medicines, agricultural production and animal husbandry with and without chemicals, child-birthing, child-rearing, cooking, and living in community. There was little to nothing written about these though people talked about them in daily transactions and interactions. It was also very common for people talk about “*ser educado*” or “to be educated” which meant to have good manners; it was unrelated being educated with schooling knowledge. In contrast to local knowledge and “being educated,” schooling knowledge was what students wrote and studied in their notebooks. The written knowledge in notebooks helped students learn to read and write, pass their classes and move to the next grade, to eventually graduate. The academic-local knowledge distinction was also evident in an everyday narrative: those “who can” were “somebody” and those “who cannot” were “nobody” – a reference to how basic literacy (through formal schooling) made a person a human being to be respected, a “somebody” with a voice who no longer had to suffer humiliations, shame and silence. I address the importance of local-schooling knowledge regarding values and values education in chapters 7 and 8.

Below, I turn to research that examines how teacher beliefs and knowledge relate with teacher practice. I then look at research that investigates how relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice can be better understood in micro contexts (e.g., content specific, changing classroom environments) and macro contexts (e.g., education policies, curriculum).

Teacher beliefs-knowledge-practice relationships. Learning theories and models help explain how knowledge and beliefs relate with practice.

There are many different kinds of learning theory. Each emphasizes different aspects of learning, and each is therefore useful for different purposes. To some extent, these differences and emphases reflect a deliberate focus on the slice of the multi-dimensional problem of learning, and to some extent they reflect more fundamental

differences in assumptions about the nature of knowledge, knowing, and knowers, and consequently about what matters in learning. (Wenger, 2001, p. 3-4)

Education policies, curricular materials and schooling priorities are founded upon beliefs about the purposes of education; teaching-learning experiences, content and instruction that will attain those purposes; and how these will be evaluated (Tyler, 1949). Guided by teacher preparation, professional development and their socio-professional environment, teachers use a toolbox or library of learning theories that they have developed; these are based on each teacher's beliefs systems, including their knowledge about teaching and learning.

Educational reforms regularly face challenges in how to help administrators and teachers understand, apply and implement new theoretical principles, foundations and methods embedded in curricular reform materials. Mandates and physical resources have been found to be insufficient for supporting paradigm shifts and changes in administrator teacher beliefs and knowledge. In this section, I review multiple learning theories the government and teacher participants drew upon in teaching-learning settings, discourse, policies and curricular resources^{ix}. Since behaviorism and individual constructivism received the most attention in Nicaraguan schooling, I begin with those. Professional development, values education and learning outside the classroom foregrounded social learning theories, which I briefly analyze as well.

Behaviorism. With arguably the deepest roots in formal schooling in the West, behaviorism views learning as a change in behavior that occurs in response to experience as people interact emotionally or physiologically with stimuli around them (Boyanton, 2010). The theory posits that learning occurs through a stimuli-response sequence, usually through repetition that promotes conditioned changes in behaviors. Teachers use rewards or “reinforcers” to increase learners’ target or “good” behaviors and punishments that seek to decrease or extinguish “bad” behaviors. Responsibility for teaching is shared between the teacher – who provides external stimuli – and externally defined curricula, education policies and discourse that guide or determine the content and methods a teacher uses in the classroom.

Teachers develop and maintain complex systems of implicit and explicit beliefs about learning and knowledge from a behaviorist perspective after 12 years in the behaviorist settings of primary and secondary school. These beliefs inform practices in which teachers

transmit information (stimuli) from a standardized curriculum using the same resources, methods and time for one large group of learners. Repetition of information (stimuli) is critical until a group is conditioned or learns the information (considered a conditioned response). Teacher praise, tangible rewards, removal punishments (taking away what children want), and disciplinary actions serve as extrinsic motivators teachers use to enhance the learning process.

The teacher is positioned as the content expert and the person who shapes and controls student learning and other classroom behaviors. Teachers use stimuli that evoke physiological responses – such as fear and desire – to condition students to develop certain target behaviors that support learning as well as rewards and punishments. A learner is a passive recipient of stimuli whose mind resembles a “blank slate” or container to be filled. Students learn through repetition of information – in the classroom and at home studying – to memorize and later provide a faithful reproduction and representation of it when called upon to do so. Teachers assess student learning at the end of each instructional cycle; classroom and schools then rank student performance to evaluate individual learning and as another reward or punisher (stimuli). Since learning happens and can be accurately assessed in the same way no matter the needs or assets a learner brings, classroom composition or size is irrelevant – except in regard to classroom management of unruly student behaviors.

Behaviorism’s “fundamental underlying tenet...fervently denies the existence of complex internal forces which cannot be measured, controlled, or even fully explained but are inextricably related to, and have a tremendous impact on, the behaviors humans engage in (Austin & Carr, 2000; Buckley, 1989; Doyle, 2009; Mader, 2009)” (Weber, 2010, p. 93). The teacher’s role is to provide correct stimuli-response combinations to learners, provide correct/incorrect feedback, and repeat stimuli as necessary. The student’s role is similar to that of a tape recorder: be quiet, listen and absorb information the teacher or textbook transmits. If a student does not learn, it logically follows that if a teacher did her part transmitting correct stimuli a student who does not learn is the only one at fault .

By explicitly omitting cognition in learning, behaviorist-oriented teachers, curricular materials and education policies ignore prior knowledge and motivation or belief systems of students and teachers, as well as social learning in classrooms (Weber, 2010). Teachers, teacher trainers and curriculum do not take into account teacher and learner diversity, the

effects of language and communication in teaching-learning processes, or how local and culturally informed ways of thinking, knowing and communicating interact with ways introduced through formal schooling. Curricular content, planning processes and instructional methods can be geared to one homogenous population of learners implemented by a uniform and almost interchangeable population of teachers.

Nicaragua, like its neighbors, has one national curriculum from which teachers plan together the final Friday morning of each month. Nicaragua's one-size-fits-all curriculum is rooted in behaviorist principles as is teacher curricular implementation. MINED officials demand and supervise uniformity in planning, instruction and assessment practices – in content and timing. The curriculum is based on a unigraude, urban reality that provides “little to no opportunity for minority students to express their particular experiences and non-mainstream view of the world” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 7) – the “minority” being rural, multigraude students not represented in curricular content, resources or priorities. The curriculum and official pedagogy deemed teacher and learner differences – including developmental differences – irrelevant. These behaviorist beliefs embedded in the curriculum, education processes and government policies conflicted with official constructivist discourse. Constructivism remained isolated in written government documents and common phrases in verbal discourse, like learn by doing, use lived experiences (i.e., prior knowledge), and inquiry and innovation. By not linking the two theoretical foundations in pedagogy and practice, officials left teachers to make sense of what constructivism meant (knowledge and beliefs) and how to use it in their classroom practice. I look at these challenges in chapters 7, 8 and 9. I now turn to constructivist principles and models below.

Constructivism. With the emergence of the computer, a cognitive revolution in education was born. Educators replaced the common analogy of the brain acting like a tape recorder – absorbing or memorizing information exactly as it was transmitted – with that of a computer. Cognitive researchers argued that we had different memory systems and cognitive processing mechanisms with which to enter, store, retrieve and use information, like a computer. In the 1990s, as Central American civil wars ended and the Sandinista Revolution (with Daniel Ortega as president) was voted out of office, multilateral agencies with the U.S. and Spanish governments imported education reforms based on constructivist principles^x.

Information-processing models, concept formation research and individual constructivist theories comprise cognitive approaches that explain how individuals learn or acquire knowledge and beliefs, and how learning depends on a learner's prior knowledge and beliefs or motivation (Shell et al., 2010). Cognitive research describes how information is not simply sensory stimuli to which a learner responds, but that a learner has to actively process the information to perceive and make sense of it based on what they already know (prior knowledge). Learners simultaneously retrieve already stored information from their long-term memory to help consciously process new information in working memory. Learners have varied processing skills and capacities in controlling them through an overarching executive or control system (Atkinson & Schifffrin, 1968; Baddeley, 2001; Miller, 1956).

In best case cognitive scenarios, learners connect related information in increasingly organized networks (schemas) in long-term memory that they can easily retrieve to add new, related information. Cognitive perspectives highlight the importance of each learner's prior knowledge as well as a teacher's sequencing and organization of information to help learners "code," store and retrieve information as they learn. "So no single instructional or teaching method can guarantee the same learning results for all students" (Shell, et al., 2010, p. 15). The teacher's role differs significantly from behaviorist perspectives. Teacher needs to diagnose or assess a student's existing knowledge and beliefs, and use this information along with learning evidence to guide further learning. They use a variety of instruction and assessment methods in response to different ways learners use their culturally-informed existing knowledge, skills, language and motivation to process incoming information. In contrast to behaviorist views, the teacher is not the main person responsible for learning; instead, learning is a partnership in which the learner must be active in making meaning and learning. Metacognitive knowledge and skills – a learner's mission control – are integral to self-regulated behaviors and learning-to- learn. This control can be taught beginning in the early elementary grades, mostly through discussion, interaction and shared reflection (Eilers & Pinkley, 2006; Mevarech & Kramarski, 2003; Paris & Oka, 1986; Wall & Higgins, 2006). Less is known about whether metacognitive knowledge and skills are domain-specific or generalized (Veenman & Spaans, 2005).

Cognitive research points to difficulties in changing deeply held beliefs and knowledge that are embedded in one's cognitive networks and have been reinforced over

long periods of time. As mentioned before, K-12 students develop interconnected belief systems about teaching, learning, knowledge and content as K-12 students; these systems resist change in teacher preparation programs when student teachers are presented with new conflicting information about teacher practices, content, or curriculum during teacher preparation (Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011; Wang & Odell, 2003). These conflicts often involve deeply held behaviorist beliefs that serve as filters when student teachers try to make meaning about often conflicting cognitive views of teaching and learning. According to cognitivists, learners must experience doubt, dissonance or disequilibrium to question deeply held beliefs and begin to accommodate new information with the already learned; teachers and social learning experiences are vital in guiding this process of adapting deeply held beliefs that some term “misconceptions” or “alternative conceptions.”

The term “constructivism” represents a wide body of beliefs and research whose foundational premise argues that learners construct knowledge. “Individual constructivism” follows the research of Piagetians and what happens in an individual’s brain as she learns. Similar to information-processing models, individual constructivists describe a process in which human beings continually reorganize and restructure what they know and believe as they become aware of new information and develop new skills, adding to existing integrated networks of knowledge and beliefs (Jardine, 2010). Learning happens as an individual recognizes in fits and starts that his existing knowledge and beliefs systems are incomplete or erroneous and must be accommodated or changed. To a constructivist, learning is unpredictable and sporadic, rather than linear, sequential and predictably incremental.

Cognitive approaches to learning have spawned recommendations of research-based instructional practices. These include learning while doing, incorporating “lived experiences” of learners, building on prior knowledge and supporting learning through sequencing and organization of information. Using an individual constructivist framework, teachers tend to focus on individual learning and developmental differences in thinking and knowing, particularly in younger elementary school years. With this focus, constructivist views often ignore social learning and external influences on cognitive processing and knowledge acquisition.

Cognitive approaches help explain some weaknesses in behaviorist approaches to learning because of their focus on the internal cognitive processing that behaviorism omits

from learning. I used a cognitive approach to analyze widely held societal beliefs regarding teaching and learning in general, plans and planning, two major elementary school content disciplines (math and language arts), and values education. I also used a cognitive approach to identify knowledge and beliefs frameworks embedded in curriculum, education policies and official orientations (orders) teachers were expected to implement in and out of the classroom.

Social learning theories. These theories comprise a broad approach to understanding knowledge and knowledge acquisition. Distinct theories include social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1986), socio-cultural learning (Connery & Corran, 2010; Gibbons, 2002; Vygotsky, 1986), situated learning (Greeno, 1998) and communities of practice (Wenger, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991). An overarching focus is on co-construction of knowledge in contrast to empty vessel or “banking” models. “The main distinguishing characteristic of the situative perspective is its theoretical focus on interactive systems that are larger than the behavior and cognitive processes of an individual agent” (Greeno, 1998, p. 5-6). Socio-cultural learning “foregrounds the collaborative nature of learning and language development between individuals, the interrelatedness of the roles of teacher and learner, and the active roles of both in the learning process” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 7). Learning is the result of one’s social and cultural experiences, historically into the present, mostly through language. Knowledge is shared first in social interaction and internalized as each individual uses culturally-defined tools in an evolving socio-cultural context. Each culture’s physical and non-physical tools “capture, shape and transform thought” (Connery & Corran, 2010, p. 160).

These social learning theories are founded upon the situated and co-constructed nature of knowledge and learning within a cultural community, such as the process of learning by becoming or being a member of a community of practice (Wenger, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In contrast to behaviorism and cognitive approaches that embrace “what is essentially an individualistic notion of learning” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 7) based on “banking” models (Freire, 1983), social learning perspectives focus on social interactions and cultural tools used to mediate social and individual learning. The fundamental premises are that humans are social beings, knowledge is related to competence in skills and areas that are valued by society, and knowing comes from participating in or engaging in these areas of

competence; learning produces meanings in overlapping social contexts (Wenger, 2001, p. 4). From this perspective, knowledge is shared and has deep cultural roots. This theoretical focus embraces the “social, material and informational environments as contexts in which individual behavior occurs” (p. 6). Language and communicative interactions are fundamental to learning and identity, ways of knowing, thinking and communicating; language is much more than the “conduit or carrier of knowledge” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 6) that it is in behaviorist and cognitive approaches.

From a social learning perspective, the teacher guides or facilitates learners by using shared knowledge and tools, and modeling thinking and behavior. Learners are most challenged and acquire knowledge and skills when they can “reach beyond what they are able to achieve alone, to participate in new situations and to tackle new tasks, or... learn new ways of using language” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 8) often with the help of more knowledgeable others through temporary support or scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1986). Scaffolding in schooling involves help a person or group provides to a learner “to move toward new skills, concepts or levels of understanding” so that “what a child can do with support today, she or he can do alone tomorrow” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 10) as scaffolding decreases until it is no longer needed.

Knowing how to scaffold learners through their ever-changing “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) is an enormous challenge. Teachers develop challenging tasks for learners ready to provide enough support to help them become successful at using knowledge and skills on their own. A combination of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge help a teacher offer different levels and types of scaffolding to different students according to their individual and shared needs. Teacher-student and student-student interactions and communication are critical and constant. Learning in a sociocultural context is not simply the result of a combination of learners’ prior knowledge, beliefs, motivation, and intelligence; it is “also dependent on the social and linguistic frameworks within which their learning takes place” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 10). A socio-cultural framework focuses on the nature of talk, communication and classroom interactions to understand student learning, and use evidence of learning to guide further learning. The community and society also play a primary role. “Recognition of the need for social transmission of symbolic, socially constructed knowledge is a key reason why formal schools were created” (Shell, et al., 2010, p. 93).

Social learning frameworks are useful for understanding teaching and learning as intended or guided in formal schooling and as part of a “hidden curriculum” (Dreeben, 1968; Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2007; Spindler, 1982). In this study, I used a social learning perspective to understand influences of macro contexts on teacher beliefs-knowledge-practice relationships, including shared societal beliefs and institutional beliefs imposed on teachers by Ministry of Education materials and mandates. It was also helpful in my analysis of teacher trainer decisions and teacher learning in the San José de la Montaña nucleus of schools (a professional learning community) in this study. First Lady Murillo valued experiential learning that occurred “seven days a week in the community” over academicist knowledge and learning. Societal transformation through massive citizen participation depended on social learning “in community” and in practice.

Local or indigenous knowledge and learning. Few researchers have tried to validate teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs measures across cultural contexts. Some research in other countries with English as a Foreign Language teachers has imported English language instruments (Chacón, 2005) or translations (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). This universalist approach ignores cultural interpretations, meanings and differences that could make the English language instruments unable to measure local conceptualizations, leading to inaccurate and misleading research findings. Rather than use U.S. and Euro-centric research-based models, I focused on local or indigenous definitions and understandings of teaching, learning and beliefs.

Local knowledge and learning in some Latin American communities is rooted in liberation theology. As such, it often includes learning about and responding to “oppression, marginalization, and awakening consciousness for liberation” (Conceição & Fagundes Oliveira, 2007, p. 139). In this sense, “learning is not just the acquisition of skills, but also the development of the whole person to become an independent and critical thinker” (p. 151). Local knowledge is “connected to and organized around the lives of the most disadvantaged members of our communities” (Gandin & Apple, 2003, p. 193), and is “‘commonly generated and transmitted over a period of time in geographic and historic space’ (Fasokun, Katahoire, & Oduaran, 2005, p. 61)... in oral, more so than written form” (Merriam, 2007, p. 10-11). It is knowledge generated by communities as they join together to address local issues such as health care, farming and animal husbandry, warfare, formal and informal

education, human rights and environmental protection. It is organic because it is generated and used in local context by people and communities in their struggle for survival and efforts to build a better future, not by externally planned and enforced procedures and rules.

Conceição & Fagundes Oliveira (2007) described some aspects of local knowledge in rural Latin America.

The focus of learning is on the collective and the individual; learning is embedded in experience; the community is the source of knowledge; response to a need is expressed by an organized group; relationships between facilitators and participants are horizontal; and group involvement is paramount in the learning process. (p. 140)

Centralized education systems with one national curriculum and required pedagogy provide little possibility for teachers to incorporate local culture, language and activities into the classroom. The national curriculum is enforced with little thought to if or how that curriculum is perceived to “deny, distort, and destroy indigenous cultures” (Fenelon & LeBeau, 2006, p.22), or other minority populations. Most beliefs and knowledge research overlooks institutional and societal beliefs even though teachers must mediate and often use them in their practice.

A poly-theoretical analysis. I used a poly-theoretical analysis of relationships and contextualized enactments of teachers’ beliefs and knowledge in practice. Despite the logic of using learning theories to predict and explain relationships among teacher belief systems and practice, many studies show that each model’s logical or predicted interplays among components parts and principles are not so neat or linear in practice. The preponderance of research showing incongruence has created the idea that belief-practice relationships may vary along a continuum with certain beliefs and practices being wholly congruent and others being wholly incongruent. But this may be due more to methodological issues, specifically quantitative studies with small sample sizes that seek correlations using self-report measures “may obfuscate the complexity in the belief-practice relationship” (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 481). Some research has found that apparent incongruence or contradictions between teacher beliefs and practice can be “explained by a more complex view of students and/or teaching” that research methods may not take into account, allow to be expressed or that change according to contexts, like the content being taught (Richardson, 1991, p. 576). For example, teachers may hold certain theoretical orientations regarding teaching and learning (i.e.,

constructivist) and yet believe that a content area (i.e., social studies) is more prone to transmission of information because it requires correct answers (Richardson et al., 1991). Teachers negotiate these apparently conflicting beliefs in making decisions in their practice: teaching one way in social studies and a different way in language arts, while overall beliefs about teaching and learning may remain stable.

In the last decade, research has begun to contextualize teacher knowledge-beliefs-practices relationships. The most common context is studying how they are content-specific. Though we know people use their beliefs as a filter to interpret information and experiences, little is understood about how beliefs filter multiple and multi-dimensional factors in embedded contexts or how a person can or does control the level of filtering due to competing internal and external factors. Little is known about how beliefs nest or how teachers use these systems of beliefs differently in different contexts (Fives & Buehl, 2012). We also know that school cultures and other external micro factors like curricular reforms can hinder or inspire teacher expressions of certain beliefs systems. Research on teachers struggling with curricular reforms in math and language arts have expanded our understandings of teacher beliefs-knowledge-practice relationships considerably (Harward et al., 2014; Lipson et al., 2000; Stevens et al., 2000; Troia et al., 2011; Xu & Brown, 2016). Studying simultaneous combinations of micro contexts (e.g., school environment, curricular influences) and macro contexts with teacher cognitions that together influence teacher practice need further study. I turn to findings from more contextualized research below.

Teacher beliefs-knowledge-practice relationships in micro contexts. In the last two decades, math researchers have begun to argue for contextualized studies of teacher belief systems and knowledge – in general and specific to math – to understand teacher practices in math classrooms. When math reforms mandated new curricular knowledge and practices – and rarely looked at belief systems – school districts faced a challenge of extreme variability in reform math implementation. To understand this variability, math research began to look at teacher knowledge as a system along with multiple beliefs that teachers drew upon to make sense of PD and external factors related to reform curriculum and practices. These studies began to show how teacher knowledge acquisition was a “jagged” or non-linear process based on what a teacher already knew and believed about math and teaching math as well as external models and environmental factors. Reforms included an

almost exponential expansion of math knowledge coinciding with changes in ways of understanding math, beliefs and attitudes about math, how to communicate using a new math language and tools, and linking math to real-life^{xi}. Reform mandates and reliance on curricular materials to guide these changes proved woefully inadequate. Little attention was given to how certain types of content-specific knowledge in relation to often contradicting beliefs and knowledge influenced or hampered belief enactment. More research is required on how this occurs in different classroom contexts.

Rather than focus only on “effective” math teachers who successfully implement math reform curriculum, research has begun to study change and continuity among teachers participating in math and language arts reforms. This inclusion of a much broader population of teachers as they were introduced to paradigm shifts in three distinct content areas has expanded the body of knowledge regarding teacher cognitive systems, how they use them and how they are related to teacher practice. Stevens (2000) found that some teachers went through several phases in which their belief systems and knowledge changed along with practices. Teachers who believed teaching and learning in reading required a decontextualized skills and phonics focus tended to see students as one group through that beliefs lens; text was the means to reach skills and phonics learning. As teachers began to incorporate more of a whole word and making meaning approach, some still focused on skills and drills that continued to serve “as a screen that blocked their view of the children as learners” though some began to “teach skills in context” as embedded in the texts. These two phases were what I observed most in Nicaragua. A third shift involved changing beliefs about students as well as teaching and learning in reading, and reading itself. Teachers began to observe how children were learning to improve learning. Even though the reforms were specific to reading, a teacher explained her shift in beliefs, knowledge and practice: “I think what I think what I am doing is learning how kids learn’ and that what she was discovering was that each child was different” (p. 555) and how she could respond to those differences. Even though the reforms focused on reading knowledge and practice, changing beliefs helped teachers expand their knowledge and change their practices.

Similar trends occurred in research on language arts teachers, particularly as they taught reading and writing. Once again researchers began to contextualize “generic” and static or linear understandings of relationships among teacher cognitions and practice as they

related with one part of the language arts content: reading or writing. Decades of battles between phonics and whole word educators provided a breadth of classroom contexts with different curricular changes and district mandates that ping-ponged teachers between a more skills-and-drills teaching practice to a more constructivist, whole word approach. Teachers did not have to simply accumulate essential knowledge, or certain types of knowledge in a sequential, orderly fashion. Instead, elementary school teachers had to develop and balance a sophisticated set of cognitive understandings and beliefs about reading, teaching reading, and teaching and learning in general with the changing curricular expectations, content and suggested teacher practices. Research on these paradigm shifts that require new teacher practices rooted in changes in beliefs and knowledge highlight how “teacher professionalization...involves many factors at play interactively and simultaneously” (Xu & Brown, 2016, p. 155).

Many policy and curricular paradigm shifts mandated teacher knowledge and practice changes that required teachers to not just move away from behaviorist-oriented “skills-and-drills” penmanship practice, endless spelling quizzes to support memorization and product-oriented teaching of writing; decontextualized decoding skills in reading; and “chug-and-plug to find the one correct answer through one correct procedure” math knowledge and skills but to devalue that knowledge. What some reform efforts failed to take into account were how the paradigm shifts were not just in teacher knowledge, but also in related beliefs systems. For example, behaviorist approaches in math and language arts positioned the teacher as expert writer, reader and mathematician who transmitted her knowledge in packaged pieces; the student was a passive learner who responded to tasks developed by the teacher in a sequence already structured in specific time periods the teacher assigned.

Reforms required teachers to throw out much of what they had learned over time and experience and – similar to a tape recorder or empty vessel – embrace constructivist-oriented approaches that not only meant curricular and instructional changes, but changes in beliefs about how teaching and learning occurred, what teacher-student and student-student interactions happened, and how learning in different content blocks within a discipline was to be assessed, among many other beliefs. As mandates, curriculum developers and district personnel seemed to communicate that the change was as easy as flipping a switch: behaviorism off, constructivism on. The belief in a strong curriculum as key held sway even

as constructivism promoted the need for a local, situated curriculum based on local knowledge upon which learners built new understandings. Reforms often hit bumps in implementation when PD did not recognize how to bridge teachers' knowledge and beliefs with new curricular knowledge and beliefs.

Under reforms, teachers were expected to make paradigm shifts in their knowledge and practice in a very short period of time. They were to know, embrace and teach process-oriented writing that respected individual rhythms, ideas and potential with no attention to how their beliefs systems helped filter and frame this new information. Teachers were to learn and know about math sense, patterns and relationships, how to use a series of cognitive and physical math tools, include cognitively guided instruction and respect process and math thinking as well as final product. The "traditional" archetypes were replaced with new ways of thinking about math and language arts, new understandings of purpose, new teacher identities and other beliefs all wrapped into reform packages. When reform investments did not produce classroom changes in the time frame presumed by district or school personnel, researchers began to study why reform implementation varied so widely.

Investigations found explanations in teacher negotiations of their own knowledge and belief systems with those of the reforms being imposed upon them. When teacher systems dovetailed with reform – and they shared understandings about the content, its purpose, how to teach it, why and how teaching and learning occurred in general (learning theories) – the transition to reform curricula being implemented was smoother than when parts of these systems clashed and were left unaddressed. Research also highlights the importance of classroom management beliefs and knowledge in context, and how when teachers began to experiment with writing workshops and conferencing as part of a shift towards process-oriented writing curriculum developers and PD did not take into account – or teachers did not understand – how the new proposed methods required students to be self-regulators with highly developed self-control. Not only were teachers' content beliefs and knowledge paramount to understanding their practices, their beliefs about classroom management were as well (Troia et al., 2011) as many teachers did not believe that young students could not be self-regulators. Nicaraguan teachers repeatedly told me they refused to use math manipulatives because their students turned them into toys or weapons. Teachers rarely taught students to count, learn one-to-one association or to represent math problems in

multiple ways. Over and over, as research attempts to understand relationships among the beliefs-knowledge-practice triad in contexts it becomes more and more apparent that multiple, overlapping and at times conflicting beliefs and knowledge must be acknowledged and studied in much the same way teachers negotiate them.

The tendency in some research to isolate one area – like teacher knowledge or teacher beliefs – is also questioned. Lack of teacher knowledge or understanding of the reform curriculum hindered changes in teacher practice, just as it did in Nicaraguan multigrade elementary schools. But teacher knowledge alone is “not sufficient” in teaching (Xu & Brown, 2016). “A core body of formal, systematic, and codified principles concerning good...practice,” (p. 155) is necessary. These listings of core knowledge “can be reflected in standards or other codified documents, representing shared knowledge...Yet, the knowledge base is insufficient” (p. 155). The systemic, contextualized nature of teachers’ changing use of knowledge and beliefs is necessary while also taking into account beliefs about teaching and learning embedded in curricular materials. This research has provided a growing base of knowledge regarding the importance of studying internal cognitive systems with external factors – in the more micro school environment and macro policy environment – to develop a nuanced and accurate understanding of how teachers use different components in these systems as they practice their craft. In Nicaragua, it became imminently apparent that the MINED via the World Bank and other outside agencies had imported constructivist discourse and judgements (i.e., constructivism = good, “traditional, memoristic” = bad) without accompanying shifts in its curriculum, PD, planning or teacher supervision. This lack of cohesion opened the spaces research has documented in which teachers must decide which parts of their knowledge and beliefs they use alongside curricular content knowledge and beliefs in their planning, instruction and learner assessment.

Research does not identify which contextual components or factors are important to take into account to better understand interactions among teacher knowledge and beliefs as teachers plan, instruct and assess learning. Many mention micro-institutional and macro-national factors as they relate with education, teaching and learning. Some studies identified contextual importance during curricular shifts from a more behaviorist curriculum to a constructivist approach. The multiple beliefs and knowledge shifts have been documented, but not together. Beliefs about the role of the teacher and students, for example, were

embedded in the curriculum. Though they may have been explicitly taught once or a few times in PD, guidance through deeper conceptual changes in multiple beliefs systems is known to take time and many reforms faltered through high levels of variability in implementation because of the slowness of these shifts. "The provision of practices without theory may lead to mis-implementation or no implementation at all, unless teachers' beliefs are congruent with the theoretical assumptions of the practice" (Richardson et al., 1991, p. 579). On the other hand, "Programs in which theory is discussed and which focus on changing beliefs without proposing practices that embody those theories may lead to frustration" (p. 579). Richardson and her colleagues recommended a three-pronged approach to successful reform shifts – what Nicaraguan officials call curricular transformation: use "teachers' background theories, beliefs and understandings" of teaching and learning in the targeted content area; use "theoretical frameworks and empirical premises" from research; and use "alternative practices that instantiate both teachers' beliefs and research knowledge" (p. 579).

This is much easier said than done. Teachers steeped in behaviorist or "curricularist" (Lipson et al., 2000) beliefs tended to teach skills through drills in a sequential order using contrived assignments that focused on individual memorization of knowledge and skills through repeated drills (Troia et al., 2011). They expected certain behaviors that would lead to a small portion of children excelling, others learning the basics and still others failing – mostly due to not behaving as expected. Teachers during curricular reforms who shifted their focus to individual students reported that similar shifts in their own knowledge, beliefs and practice followed (Stephens et. al, 2000). The focus on individual student needs appeared to influence teacher understanding of curricular content and new teaching methods. The shift required an expansion and flexible use of a teacher's beliefs and knowledge as she balanced her understandings with curricular content and each student's understandings. Teachers who continued to teach to the entire class as if they were one body that should move and learn at the same rhythm tended to continue with original "mindsets" based more on behaviorist models and incorporate some new mandated practices – like conferencing in writing – with a focus still on skills, drills and final product. They controlled writing times, activities, and content, making curricular reform "primarily structural and superficial" (Lipson et al., 2000, p. 227).

Research documents a jagged path towards change in practices as teachers grapple with enormous shifts in their beliefs systems, including interwoven knowledge and understandings about more than just content and learning but also use, development, processes and purpose (Harward et al., 2014; Lipson et al., 2000; Troia et al, 2011). Teacher's existing belief systems interwoven with their content and general pedagogical knowledge often interfere with understanding reform content and what it requires in practice. Paradigm shifts like those in math and language arts in the past few decades have proven to be very difficult. More traditional curricula in math and language arts tended to present knowledge acquisition as linear and deceptively simplified as sequential. Reform curricula approach content from cognitive, constructivist and non-linear – at times even cyclical – processes with multiple knowledge and skills being used concurrently. This creates situations in which teachers have to not only understand all these changes, they have to believe the changes are important and know how to translate them into new planning, instruction and assessment practices. Understanding the immensity and complexity of these shifts, though, helps understand variability in teacher practices and how to work with that variability. For example, when transitioning from product to process oriented writing, many teachers approach the latter as sequential and linear – in line with their beliefs and knowledge – despite being told to be flexible and focus on thinking and problem-solving.

In writing, for example, teachers use their existing knowledge and beliefs as they grapple with changes in how writing is understood, taught, and represented in curricular reforms moving away from final product-orientations and towards a multi-dimensional and iterative writing process^{xii}.

Recent evidence suggests that teachers display quite a bit of variability in how they enact process-oriented instruction, and this variability is influenced by their epistemologies and beliefs, experiences as teachers and writers, and teaching context (Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2001; Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Fink, 2002); Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). (as cited in Troia et al., 2011, p. 156)

Some research links low teacher knowledge to low implementation of changing curriculum, but this needs to be researched more fully (Harward et al., 2014).

A recent trend toward scripted curriculum provides another context for studying relationships among internal cognitive systems and external mandates that teachers negotiate in different environmental contexts. The scripted curriculum is often introduced as “the primary source of instruction” (Eisenbach, 2012, p. 154). Teacher interactions with a scripted curriculum differ according to their beliefs systems and knowledge. Some accommodate quite faithfully to its demands. Other teachers negotiate and infuse their “own ideas and beliefs into a prepackaged agenda, creating a hybrid classroom (Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002)” (p. 155), while still others rebel, verbally and actively rejecting the imposition on various grounds. I observed a high level of accommodation to the national curriculum in Nicaragua and some negotiation. The few vocal rebellions I witnessed – against the national curriculum and teacher PD – couched each in “politicized” terms and objected to what some teachers termed Sandinista Party overreach. Non-vocal rebellions were common and mostly comprised of ignoring parts or entire units in the curriculum and mandated changes in assessment methods. When scripted curricula are the main instructional resource, the beliefs embedded in that curricula prevail as do the messages the education policy that mandates their use send about teachers, teaching and learning. Though scripted curriculum help some novice teachers, they also have been shown to make some teachers feel “disenfranchised as professionals” or “confused over the purpose of scripted mandates” to the point where some “believe that such curriculum suggests that policy makers no longer trust educators to do their job and do it well” (Eisenbach, 2012, p. 153). Policies that include mandating use of scripted curricula tend to “view and treat the teacher as little more than a dutiful delivery mechanism for so-called proven literacy education programs and methods” (Brooks, 2007). They ignore research that highlights the critical importance of teacher beliefs and knowledge in the classroom, and how they relate with practice. They send a strong message that teaching is not a highly creative endeavor based on extensive knowledge and skills, but a task that requires faithful compliance to the teacher program and accompanying textual materials. The national curriculum in Nicaragua serves in many ways as a scripted curriculum not because it has all the information a teacher needs to instruct but because of shared collegial beliefs and orientations to that effect that are reinforced with the education climate and alignment of curriculum, policy, mandates and supervision regarding uniformity and strict compliance in teacher planning, instruction and assessment.

Teacher beliefs-knowledge-practice relationships in macro contexts. Though an enormous body of beliefs research shows that beliefs exist in complex systems that may share a hierarchy or at least be embedded within multiple levels of networks, little research examines beliefs as systems that teachers use in different ways and even flexibly in relation to other beliefs and knowledge and in relation to micro and macro contexts. Fives & Buehl (2012) found two “unique exceptions,” both in science education. One was a case study of a science teacher (Bryan, 2003) that examined how micro-contextual factors filtered by the teacher’s flexible use of her varied belief systems and knowledge regarding science teaching and learning influenced her practice. The other, from a socio-cultural perspective, examined how shared and personal religious beliefs interacted with a number of other teacher belief systems among ten Egyptian teachers, including teaching and learning beliefs and the science curriculum. “The perspective taken to examine teachers’ larger belief systems, and the recognition of teachers as people with a range of beliefs and experiences beyond school settings, should be noted by others in the field” (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 477).

Lim (2010) found that some pre-school teachers’ cultural beliefs served as an important lens or filter in their choice of pedagogy. Pre-school teachers of Malay heritage, for example, focused on child-centered and child development pedagogy. Indian pre-school teachers tended to stress communicative development with their learners more than other pedagogies and no Chinese pre-school teacher in her study used an emergent literacy viewpoint. Lim called for “further research...to see if these viewpoints fell along cultural lines as suggested from this data” (p. 221).

Spear-Swerling et al. (2016) identified the need to fill gaps in literature on teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice with research across nations. Most research in this area that is contextualized in language arts, for example, is in relation to English, “a highly opaque writing system” (p. 71). Spanish has a more transparent orthography and writing system though similar content including spelling, handwriting, grammar, capitalization and sentence structure; text composition; and writing processes. Reading has similar “if not all the same component reading abilities” (p. 71) including phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, decoding skills, reading fluency and vocabulary. There are obvious developmental differences in learning Spanish, as initial Spanish readers, for example, are expected to move through initial reading states faster than initial English readers. Developmental and other

differences in language – as one more micro factor – may create differences in relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice; more research is required.

Another macro factor that is not well understood is the influence of local knowledge and beliefs mentioned previously. Shared societal beliefs systems – whether they are directly or indirectly related to schooling – are important to include in studying beliefs (Fives & Buehler, 2012) and yet there are few studies who do it. Curricular materials inevitably prioritize cultural ways of thinking, knowing and communicating over others. When this happens, teachers and students from marginalized populations face extra teaching and learning challenges. The more family and community cultural ways of thinking, knowing and communicating match with those in the formal school setting, the greater the learning opportunities are for everyone involved. Lower integration or synchronicity contributes to fewer and less successful learning opportunities available for the least privileged groups or social sectors. That in turn affects knowledge acquisition and learner identities in the formal school setting (Friedman Hansen, 1979).

Some teachers consciously incorporate students' cultural ways into their classroom. Other teachers knowingly and unknowingly negate students' cultural ways due to ignorance (lack of knowledge) or through teacher beliefs that the students and their families are inferior (Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983). A teacher's lack of knowledge or deficit-based belief system will be "heard" and "seen" in communication acts between teachers and students, education tools, and government resource investment priorities, educational access decisions, and family involvement mechanisms. The success of teachers who are or are not part of the school communities' histories or shared knowledge and beliefs depends in large part on their practice and decisions: how they interact with students and family, how they integrate local ways with official ways of knowing and communicating in instruction and assessment of learning, and how their classroom practice provides successful learning opportunities or not for their students.

A socio-cultural approach to understanding the dynamic system of intrapersonal teacher beliefs and knowledge with the interpersonal interactions in the classroom in a historic and contemporary context in which it has developed and evolves is uncommon. Understanding the macro and micro systems as they relate to each other helps one gain "a much greater ability to discover the ways that individual behaviors are influenced by social

relationships, as well as how these become expressed as cultural understandings” (Fife, 1997, p. 107).

This is apparent in the research-based consensus that beliefs that take years to build and strengthen and become embedded in complex belief systems are often the hardest to detect. They may be unconscious. The cultural and historical context in which beliefs form – and in which teaching and learning occurs and has developed historically - is a critical part of understanding teacher knowledge and beliefs, how these influence interactions and ways of communicating, and how these in turn influence understandings of student learning. It also includes understanding how this macro-environment relates to the micro-environment of the classroom and school, and to patterns in teachers’ intrapersonal systems of knowledge and beliefs.

'To understand, appreciate and evaluate the real meaning of the education system of a nation, it is essential to know something of its history and traditions, of the forces and attitudes governing its social organisations, of the political and economic conditions that determine its development.' (Kandel, 1933: XIX). (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997, p. 8)

A concurrent micro and macro contextual factor for the teachers in this study was their position as multigrade teachers in rural multigrade elementary schools.

Multigrade Schools and Schooling

One of the teacher participants, Profe Regalia, repeatedly insisted that no one could understand the multigrade teacher experience without teaching two or more grades together on their own. In this section I explain this widely held belief among multigrade teachers. I provide a definition of multigrade classrooms and then explain why they are formed, the context in which they operate, their key characteristics, pros and cons regarding multigrade structures, what they need to be successful, and how they are implemented in Nicaragua and throughout Latin America – far from best practices research. I also underscore an alarming finding: when not done well, multigrade schooling contributes to governments further marginalizing their already marginalized populations (Brunswic & Valérien, 2004; Little, 1995).

The majority of school children in rural Latin America attend multigrade classrooms in which one teacher teaches two to six grades in one elementary school classroom.

Multigrade schools have between one and three teachers for two to six elementary school grades. Teachers teach two or more grades in the same time period that unigrade teachers teach only one grade. Research points to a handful of characteristics found in multigrade schools (see Table 1) which I compare with what I observed in the participating schools and classrooms.

Table 1

Key Characteristics of Multigrade Schools in Research and in Nicaragua

	Key characteristics of multigrade schools	Multigrade schools in Nicaragua
1.	<i>Multigrade classrooms have students with a much wider range and diversity of skills, knowledge and needs than in normal unigrade classrooms.</i>	Wide range of ages due to the number of grades and the large number of over-age students due to family responsibilities, mobility and behavioral issues. Profe Liria who taught first through sixth grades in one classroom had students from five to sixteen years old in her classroom.
2.	<p><i>Multigrade teachers have many more responsibilities than their unigrade counterparts.</i></p> <p>These include administration, food/nutrition program, school discipline, “pull-out” classes (e.g., physical education), extra-curricular and all classroom maintenance – and academic planning and instruction for two or more grades</p>	<p>These myriad “hats” in Nicaragua translated into reduced instructional time. Teachers used a unigrade style of teaching in the multigrade setting – teaching each grade separately (directly and indirectly) as mandated by the MINED.</p> <p>Multigrade principals were full-time classroom teachers. They juggled administrative responsibilities during and after school hours, incurring costs for which they received no reimbursement or additional pay.^{xiii}</p>
3.	<p><i>Multigrade planning and teaching is different than unigrade teaching and it is more difficult.</i></p> <p>Differences include planning and use of instructional time, classroom management, and reliance on independent and peer learning. The cognitive, emotional and social demands on multigrade teachers are enormous.</p>	<p>Instructional planning was uniform across the nation, from one national curriculum following one procedure overseen by local MINED officials. There was no difference between unigrade and multigrade plans, other than the latter being two to six times longer.</p> <p>I analyze planning and instructional time in Chapter 6, as well as its effects in math and language arts in chapters 7 and 8.</p> <p>Teachers were overwhelmed, under-prepared and super stressed with chronic health issues and debilitating headaches with little support.</p>

4.	<p><i>Multigrade teachers and schools work with fewer resources under much more difficult work conditions than their unigrade counterparts.</i></p> <p>Multigrade schools often have the lowest budgets in the school system and teachers often have the lowest salaries among their colleagues. Instructional materials are limited and outdated, often lacking completely.</p>	<p>Multigrade classrooms had 0-5 copies for students per content area per grade; many teachers did not have a textbook for themselves for at least one content area. MG schools had no basic services (e.g., drinking water, electricity, toilets). Infrastructure was often crumbling (not among participating schools), with insufficient & dilapidated furniture and expendable supplies. No technology available. Learners with exceptionalities were not diagnosed and teachers not trained in how to accommodate to their needs.</p>
5.	<p><i>Multigrade schools are often physically isolated from each other and supervisory offices – meaning little support.</i></p>	<p>Teachers responsible for book distribution from capital. Zero to two visits per year from district administrative offices for matriculation numbers and pedagogic accompaniment/supervision.</p> <p>Many teachers traveled long distances each day, adding hours to the school day; some lived in school community away from family the entire week.</p>
6.	<p><i>Multigrade teachers are often less satisfied than their unigrade counterparts due to a series of stressors related to the above characteristics.</i></p>	<p>In accordance with research, multigrade teacher perceptions included a heavy planning burden, frequent interruptions, relatively high off-task time, disruptive and violent behavior, and insufficient time for adequate teaching of subjects, re-teaching content, preparing class materials, grading, feedback, and individual attention. Many teachers and parents worried that multigrade provided an inferior education for rural students.</p>
7.	<p><i>Multigrade teachers in Latin America, Africa and Asia tend to use one method that was predominant in all participating schools and classrooms, described below:</i></p> <p><i>“A rigid format in which teachers lecture, students passively copy from the blackboard, participation is not encouraged, and rote memorization is the norm...Teacher-student relations are often hierarchical and there is minimal discussion among students...This is likely due to local cultural norms guiding teacher behavior, as well as to the fact that teachers receive limited training and practical experience in the implementation of active pedagogy” (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000, p. 35).</i></p>	
<p>From: Benveniste & McEwan, 2000; Hayes, 1993; Kline, 2002; Little, 1995; Little, 2006; Mason & Burns, 1996; McEwan, 2008; Mulryan-Kyne, 2004; Mulryan-Kyne, 2008; Thomas & Shaw, 1992; Veenman, 1995; Veenman, 1996.</p>		

As can be appreciated from the above characteristics, “building a successful multigrade school program involves much more than providing hardware and developing administrative structures” (Thomas & Shaw, 1992, p. iii), and yet that was mostly the focus under Ortega and multinational accords that focused on school access. Pedagogical differences and challenges were not understood, valued or addressed. Instead, multigrade classrooms were “an anomalous structure embedded in a graded system” in which teachers “deliver[ing] two different curricula to students twice the age range (or more) in the same amount of time” (Mason & Burns, 1996, p. 313). Liria delivered six different curricula in the same amount of time, while Murella, Pelucita, Dinora and Geronima delivered three. Teachers faced a myriad of instructional challenges including how to design effective instruction with clear learning targets for different grades and cognitive needs and use instructional time efficiently; how to manage a classroom with many simultaneous learning activities and feedback needs – and lots of noise; how to organize, foment and manage independent learning, goal-setting and other student motivation (Veenman, 1996). The MINED mandated a uniform planning process that standardized content and instructional methods in such a way that the challenges teachers expressed – and research cites – were ignored or deemed unnecessary. The MINED had a similar approach to teacher preparation and professional development.

Multigrade teachers rarely identified advantages to their teaching structure, while disadvantages abounded when compared to urban, single-grade settings (Veenman, 1995). When Profe Liria and Profe Pelucita were transferred into the capital – where they both lived – they expressed relief. Both said they preferred the unigrade setting. Mulryan-Kyne (2004, p. 6-7) summed up what I heard time and again from teachers in San José:

Teaching two or more programmes in the time that is available to single-grade teachers for the teaching of one programme is also a frequent concern of teachers. Many teachers cite lack of time to reflect on teaching, lack of relevant professional training, and inadequate materials and resources as further problems (Perras, 1983; Pratt & Treacy, 1986; Stauber, 1985). Teachers were frequently critical of teacher training courses, claiming that they did not prepare them to teach in a multigrade class (e.g., Pratt & Treacy, 1986), while feelings of neglect, isolation, lack of support

and dissatisfaction with the quality of their work were expressed by some (e.g., Perras, 1983; Strauber, 1985).

Nicaragua also imposed high subject matter repetition in its curriculum and instruction, like many multigrade systems around the world.

Why multigrade schools were formed contributed to a generalized perception that they offered a lower or second class quality in education. Frequent reasons cited were that they were a necessity due to geographical or demographic changes, administrative or pedagogical challenges (absenteeism, insufficient number of students in each grade, teacher shortages), political reasons, such as stemming rural flight into urban areas, or as a temporary measure on the promise of someday in the future establishing a unigrade school in its stead (Brown, 2010; Thomas & Shaw, 1992). In Latin America, few multigrade schools were formed for pedagogical reasons. In contrast, pedagogical reasons were the main justifications for forming them in the North. They tended to not be endowed with sufficient physical and human resources, had little relevance and were less effective in learning achievement and retention (Kline, 2002). In developing countries in general, “multi-grade is viewed by the teaching profession as a second-class solution to educational problems which beset disadvantaged communities” (Brown, 2010, p. 32).

These contemporary perspectives flew in the face of a celebrated history during which “the multigrade/multi-age classroom was the dominant model of education until the arrival of the industrial revolution and urbanization” (Veenman, 1995, p. 366). The industrial revolution in the mid-1800s coincided with a restructuring of schools, curriculum and teacher preparation that focused on monograde, mono-age classrooms that classified and ranked students according to performance to better track them into future positions in society, especially job opportunities. Since this shift, teacher preparation, curriculum, professional development, instructional and learning materials, and educational program administration have been designed almost exclusively towards the mono-grade classroom (Little, 1996).

The shift to unigrade education changed government and educators’ focus “to think of instruction in terms of the graded classroom” (Miller, 1991, p. 3) and relegated the multigrade classroom invisible and wholly marginalized. Multigrade schooling “is an educational condition barely addressed in national policies of education, almost non-existent in the content of teacher education courses, ignored by national curriculum developers

and...it is essentially a problem by teachers and students in peripheral rural areas unsupported and unrecognized by mainstream and centralized education systems” (Little, 1995, p. 6). Still, multigrade classrooms remain the most common classroom organization in some Scandinavian countries, many Asian Pacific nations, and most rural areas of Africa and Latin America.

In Nicaragua as in most countries, teacher preparation, professional development, curricular materials and administrative requirements were geared almost singularly to the unigrade classroom. “The knowledge required for effective multi-grade teaching is rendered illegitimate by those with a responsibility for training and supporting teachers in their work” (Little, 1995, p. 3). The assumption was that a teacher familiar with the unigrade classroom can function in a multigrade setting with no additional training. Governments “create ‘quasi’ multigrade schools with limited chances of success” (Thomas & Shaw, 1992, p. 9).

Multigrade teaching requires special national, community and individual teacher efforts to implement well. It relies on self-directed learning and peer tutoring, a variety of pedagogical approaches, open space and activity centers, movable furniture (desks, tables, bookshelves), careful curriculum planning adapted to the locale and integrated (thematic approaches), non-graded instruction with differential expectations, teacher-developed materials, a flexible school and promotional schedule, and ongoing assessment and feedback (Brunswic & Valerien, 2004). Overcoming constraints requires pedagogy that focuses on the learner over the subject matter (Hayes, 1993). Teacher knowledge is fundamental as are opportunities for teachers and communities to take ownership of education reforms, as is extensive and varied support to teachers and meaningful involvement of students and community members (Kline, 2002).

Much research underscores the need for government policies and a prioritization of rural education. Policies must address macro issues like multigrade teacher training, recruitment and support, flexible curricular implementation and adaptation, flexible promotion and classroom materials (Hayes, 1993). The World Bank and others call for decentralization and more local control. Carnoy (2004; 2008) argues that there is no research that supports decentralization reforms; he argues that success does not depend on levels of centralization or decentralization. Instead, teacher knowledge, ownership and attitudes are the most important (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000). “Teacher ownership is supposed to come

not from giving teachers influence over the administrative functions of the school, but over what they actually teach” (Kline, 2002, p. 172).

When implemented well, multigrade schooling has contributed to many successes. It has provided basic education in thinly populated areas, effectively utilized scarce educational inputs, helped maintain the rural school as part of village identity and cultural life; expanded access to girls by expanding school spaces and ensuring proximity of schools to homes. In aspects related to teaching and learning, it has helped students "learn to learn" and "learn to teach" through independent inquiry and peer tutoring, contributed to strong student-teacher relationships over time, and benefitted student peer socialization. It also has removed the stigma associated with repetition as well as the societal cost. When allowed, teachers have a greater opportunity to experiment and innovate with students and set long-term goals with students; teachers know students at the beginning each year when they teach them multiple years in a row. When successful, multigrade education has lowered repetition and drop-out rates while raising promotion and graduation rates. While it may incur higher costs per student, it incurs lower costs per student graduated.

It is exactly these special efforts that are missing in most government multigrade schools in Latin America (Thomas & Shaw, 1992). There is often no multigrade-specific curriculum, teacher preparation or professional development, no autonomy or flexibility in curricular planning and implementation, and no time or resources made available to create local materials. Multigrade teachers are commonly marginalized by urban colleagues, administrators and education officials in many ways and most interactions. Nicaraguan multigrade teachers spoke of professional marginalization constantly as a ubiquitous presence in their socio-professional environment. They, like their colleagues across the continent, found “themselves in schools which force them to adopt multi-grade methods... teaching in the most disadvantaged economic and social conditions, [and] they are themselves the most disadvantaged teachers in terms of education, level of training, status, and, often, social background... work[ing] within the norm and [is] not expected to make major intellectual adaptations” (Little, 1995, p. 21) to curriculum, classroom organization, use of space, planning or more appropriate learning materials.

The perception that multigrade offered a lower quality education is also supported by research. “When the required resources, training and regulatory framework are not

forthcoming, however, the results can be disappointing” (Brunswic & Valerien, 2004, p. 38). In Nicaragua, the San Jose High Schools had multigrade feeder elementary schools. The principal and teachers said there were no advantages to those students’ experiences, and three high school teachers cited disadvantages – the most common being that students were not used to the unigrade context with different teachers for every subject. Multigrade students had not honed their dictation skills well enough to succeed in the short class time periods required in high school. All parents and most teachers cited multigrade as a complete disadvantage. “When done poorly, [multigrade schooling] causes enormous detriment to the students” (Hayes, 1993, p. 5).

Rural multigrade teachers were survivors of their rural multigrade experience when they were students. As professionals, they were marginalized and taught young people who were the most disadvantaged by the school system in socio-economically and politically marginalized communities. Government support was a constant message of loyal compliance to the unigrade curriculum which would never solve or begin to address the underlying weaknesses of rural multigrade education. For many, the multigrade teacher “cannot, and indeed should not, be expected to solve the problems of the multi-grade classroom alone” (Little, 1995, p. 41). And yet, in Nicaragua and throughout Latin America, that was often where the responsibility lay – under threat of punishment for deviation from the unigrade norm.

Rather than supporting development, many worried that multigrade schools with their unigrade focus and rote implementation were setting up rural children, youth and families for schooling failure. Weak and irrelevant education in which students’ physical security was not guaranteed caused some rural students and families to lose interest in schooling. Higher and earlier drop-out rates, and lower enrollment rates, promoted under-development, closed off future education opportunities, and deepened poverty. Even though the multigrade setting could nurture child and youth development and learning – like it was shown to do in the northern hemisphere – the broader political environment and lack of teacher preparation combined with autonomy and support made multigrade schooling a detriment to most students’ learning.

Multigrade researchers underscored not only the marginalization of multigrade research (Little, 1995) but also its low quality, particularly in Latin America (McEwan,

2004). It suffered selection bias of schools or students, low level statistical analyses, no control groups, reliance on cross-sectional data and analysis (in which students and teachers may differ in unobserved or unknown ways that thus cannot be controlled for statistically), teacher self-report data about instructional practices and use of time, focus on pilots with little on large-scale replications, little use of longitudinal data, no statistical controls for differences in groups, no pre-tests, small sample sizes and leaps of faith. The small community of multigrade researchers regularly cite how little is known about instructional practices inside multigrade classrooms, and call for much more research to be done (Little, 1995; Veenman, 1996).

Conclusion

Relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice are vital to understand why a teacher chooses to practice as she does; so is understanding the multiple contexts in which a teacher works. Though research has begun to identify ways in which these relationships are content-dependent, most notably in math and language arts, more is needed. As research becomes more context-dependent, researchers have begun to mention the importance of understanding combinations of more macro contextual influences on teachers as well, including school environments, curricular reform, and broader national or shared cultural issues, like religion. More is needed to understand how these macro contexts influence teachers and how teachers use their beliefs systems and knowledge to negotiate these external influences as they practice their craft. There is a building consensus around the existence of many “limitation[s] of viewing the school as a cultural content unto itself” (Gitlin, 2014, p. 7); in contrast, there is little consensus regarding how to study relationships and processes among a conglomeration of cognitive and external influences that comprise teaching, and the constant negotiations teachers engineer individually and with colleagues as they teach. By embracing the complexity of teaching in how we research it, we can begin to move away from blaming individual teachers or schools or groups of families, and look instead at multiple inter-related contributors to persistent education challenges. By embracing and understanding the complexity of teaching in contexts, we can begin to support educators and policy makers as they seek to improve opportunities to learn for all students. In many ways, this research approach falls in line with one of the Nicaraguan government’s principal values and slogans: “It’s a shared responsibility.”

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore how teachers used their beliefs and knowledge to negotiate a variety of external influences on their teaching practice and decision-making. To understand this complex, context-dependent process, I addressed four questions:

- 1) How do teachers understand and assess their teaching?
- 2) How do teachers understand and facilitate student learning?
- 3) How do teachers distinguish or assess when learning is happening or not?
- 4) How do teachers use and communicate these understandings?

In the fourth year of the study (during out-of-field analysis and interpretation), I decided to root my analysis in four areas teachers and MINED officials cited as the most predominant and that comprised the grand majority of each teacher's professional time and focus: 1) Values education, 2) Plans and Planning, 3) Mathematics, and 4) Language and Literature.

With little information about multigrade teachers' use of beliefs and knowledge in their practice – and virtually none from Central America – an ethnographic approach was ideal. It allowed me to understand, appreciate and learn from the absolute uniqueness of each individual participant while simultaneously studying across individuals and the many situations and frames of reference within which they lived and worked. Two years of field work helped me understand relationships among cognitive and external influences and resources from teacher and MINED perspectives in overlapping and discrete contexts. Within the first six months, I realized I could never fully understand teacher perspectives without more fully understanding the contexts within which they worked, including President Ortega's socio-economic and political projects, discourses and expectations in general and for education in particular.

The government explicitly positioned teachers as protagonists or implementers of Sandinista-guided societal transformations, including pioneering the final resolution of the long-standing education crisis. This opened the way for me to engage in two interwoven ethnographies: that of the Nicaraguan state and that of multigrade elementary school teachers in the San José nucleus schools (Lewin, 2002). Ethnographies of education had begun to break out of a long history of focusing on school and classrooms as their main context

(Gitlin, 2014; Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2007), and this study contributes to the newly emerging tradition of understanding overlapping contexts that produce multi-leveled requirements and demands teachers must juggle in their daily work. I could not understand teacher perspectives without understanding how macro elements entered into their lives and influenced their beliefs and practice. I could not understand their academic roles and practices without understanding how they perceived and negotiated waves of orientations emitted by a nationally-controlled waterfall of loyalist supervisors who required teacher implementation of government values, programs and campaigns with strict expectations of compliance and threats of punishment for non-compliance.

Macro influences and national governance were not distant concepts or abstract ideas to any teacher. Constantly changing policies and orientations affected teachers' lives on a daily basis and influenced their actions, ideas, and beliefs. To understand this, I found myself undertaking two parallel and complementary ethnographic studies: a study of the Government of National Reconciliation and Unity (GRUN) and its Ministry of Education (MINED) that was critical to my more in-depth study of participating teachers and local MINED officials (Unstable Places citation). For this chapter, I describe and discuss methodological approaches and decisions I made in the following areas: the study's conceptual framework, research participants and sampling, data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation methods, ethical considerations, and study limitations.

Conceptual Framework

I sought to understand multiple influences on and entangled relationships among teacher knowledge, beliefs and practice as intrapersonal (individual), interpersonal (social interactive) and sociocultural systems. These included shared beliefs and knowledge as well as uniquely individual perspectives. I sought to understand how a heterogeneous group of teachers used these systems differently in different contexts as they interpreted experiences and external influences on their practice in idiosyncratic manners. Teachers use and adapt their intrapersonal, interpersonal and sociocultural systems and settings through multiple interactions over time. Since teachers used a combination of shared and uniquely individual beliefs to filter or understand external influences, interactions, discourses and expectations – and to make decisions – I used a socio-cognitive and socio-cultural framework for this study.

I sought to understand relationships among beliefs, knowledge and practice in a variety of macro and micro contexts over time and in relation to historical perspectives and shared or societal beliefs that were embedded and thus inseparable from each teacher's individual beliefs, knowledge, decision-making and actions. I displaced the artificial and dichotomous positioning of teachers as either agentic or reactive to look instead at how teachers enacted certain beliefs and knowledge over others when making decisions and taking action. My analysis was driven and shaped by listening to teacher beliefs and ideas, and observing their actions and interactions, to gain a nuanced understanding of how teacher cognitions related with external influences, and how they were adapted or reinforced in different settings. I spent an extended period of time interacting with teachers, students, family members, local education officials and small businesspeople to understand teacher perspectives without subjecting them to others' meanings or outside filters. I collected data from multiple sources over time to constantly check my understandings with those around me and to ensure I did not privilege one perspective over another without intention and justification (Emerson et al., 2011).

Ethnography is both process and product (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Wolcott, 2008). It requires extended fieldwork with an often malleable group of people in a specified community using multiple data collection techniques to understand complexities and nuances in people's lives. My interest lies in developing a deep understanding of context-dependent interactions and processes, understanding layered nuances and differences that are the norm of daily life, to better understand a broader reality. Through a detailed study of a small group of professionals over time, I seek to contribute knowledge and understanding to how teachers use their beliefs and knowledge in different settings in real time, and how those decisions change according to context – setting, participants, time, and more. This required extended fieldwork to build relationships, engage in co-inquiry, description, analysis and interpretation as I organized and analyzed experiences, written documents and artifacts. As a process and a way of seeing (Wolcott, 2008), ethnography encouraged me to adopt three intersecting approaches:

...to experience the ways of a group firsthand, to supplement what one is able to observe with interviewing to learn what those in the group make of their experience, and further to supplement what can be learned firsthand with information gathered or

materials prepared by others.” (Chapter 3, The Appeal of an Ethnographic Approach to Research section, para. 3)

The final ethnographic product for this study is a written reconstruction of co-constructed experiences and meanings among participating teachers, MINED officials and myself. I negotiated “the complex heterogeneity of discourse and practices” (Lather, 2014, p. 39) and analyzed situated discourses and interactions as teachers used what they believed and knew as they decided how to practice their changing profession under President Ortega. This study is a story about institutional and teacher understandings of teaching and learning in multigrade elementary schools as I understood them through participant observation that was “both the starting point and the filter” (Wolcott, 2008, Chapter 3, Experiencing: Distinguishing Between Observers and Participant Observers section, para. 9) I used to make sense of what I saw and heard. By becoming a part of each other’s lives, my perceptions became shaped by the knowledge, values, discourse and beliefs of those around me as well as our shared experiences and ways of communicating. This product is my story of their story. I tell it using teachers’ and government officials’ words and actions, but the final words, style, tone and decisions about what to put in and what to leave out are mine alone. It is a labor of over six years of systematic preparation, in-country field work, data analysis and interpretation, and writing of this final product.

To understand how teachers used their beliefs and knowledge to understand and act upon external influences I needed to understand patterns and relationships within and among participants. “The overall patterns that are rendered visible at the micro-level of interactions and discourse are constantly played off against the larger context of both historical and contemporary pressures” (Fife, 1997, p. 104). Nicaragua’s volatile socio-political climate made an ethnographic approach necessary to achieve a thorough understanding of teacher cognitions and practices (Greenhouse, 2002). The multitude and strength of external pressures on teachers and schools uncovered the “limitation of viewing the school as a cultural content unto itself” (Gitlin, 2014, p. 7). Even though teachers worked with students and families on a daily basis, everyone cited the government and the Ministry of Education as their *rector*, the entity that controlled education and their actions. These overlapping macro and micro contexts were characterized in part by contradictory and at times conflictive discourses, values, settings and actions.

Schooling is inherently riddled with power relationships among its many stakeholders (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2007), from policy makers and administrators to teachers, family members and students. Rural, multigrade teachers were marginalized professionally and as rural residents in Nicaraguan society. Most multigrade teachers were women, a fact that contributed to additional marginalization and silencing. Multigrade teachers' marginalized status was arguably most visible in government policies and orientations that overlooked rural contexts, needs and resources – demanding instead full compliance and program implementation despite contradictions rooted in homogenous nearsightedness (see Chapter 4). The government's insistence on one-size-fits-all programs and implementation procedures forced rural teachers to grapple with and create space for different forms of compliance based on government requirements and rural realities. My ethnographic approach allowed me to analyze discourse and language, perceptions and behaviors, beliefs and knowledge that often included “competing claims to validity that reflect[ed] unequal power and disparate histories” (De Nike, 2002, Conclusion section, para. 4) without trying to reach a consensus or congruent story. Instead, I included consistency and symmetry along with contradictions, opposition, self-interest and confusion. By viewing teacher and MINED struggles together – when they were in harmony, dissonance and discord – I analyzed some of “the most persistent and important problems of our schools” (Gitlin 2014, p. 2) including issues related to class, regionalisms and gender.

The macro environment of Nicaragua's centralized education system in which daily operations were guided by a waterfall of loyal Sandinista followers of President Ortega in a secretive and closed environment required that I prove myself as trustworthy in my relationships with teachers and family over time. This long-term effort continuously opened doors farther and farther into the secluded world of the MINED and its interactions with teachers in professional development (PD). By attending teacher PD and elementary classrooms, I was able to hear and observe multiple viewpoints, discourses and behaviors in different settings among the same teachers and with a wider set of colleagues. By observing teachers in multiply situated contexts over time, place and participants, I began to see instances of generalities or themes across contexts and beliefs or actions that were notable for their uniqueness or nuanced nature. I could more clearly see and hear when voices and actions were generalized and when they differed (Fine, 2014). An ethnographic stance

allowed me “to explore in minute and concrete detail the highly complex series of phenomena which operate in and around the classroom” (Wolcox 1982, p. 478), in the contexts in which they operated. By studying discourse, beliefs, knowledge and actions among different actors in the education system in professional development (PD) and elementary classroom contexts, I was able “to construct a detailed picture of the full range of dynamics at work...[in the] hope of intervening effectively toward the resolution of persisting educational problems” (p. 478).

From a socio-cognitive and socio-cultural perspective, I sought to identify and understand patterns within and systems of relationships among three intrapersonal, interpersonal and sociocultural areas:

1. *Teachers’ belief systems*, including knowledge, as inferred from perceived, explained and observed teacher practice, discourse, interaction and communication patterns in the classroom and government professional development classes, with supporting documents and classroom artifacts; and
2. *Teacher practice*, as perceived, explained and observed in classroom routines, teacher and student interactions, lessons, artifacts, teaching and learning strategies, language and communication patterns, and interactions in the classroom and professional development sessions, with supporting documents and classroom artifacts; and
3. *Local and national events, discourse and behaviors* that showed patterns in governance styles, beliefs and values, policies and programs that were related to education and the participating schools and communities (including Nicaraguan media, commemoration ceremonies, “MINED INFORMA”⁸ articles and documents, Town Hall documents, and rural community “Cabinet”⁹ meeting notes).

The socio-cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives helped me learn about how teachers, family and government officials made meaning about teaching and learning, how teachers used their system of knowledge and beliefs to assess and facilitate learning in the classroom, and to understand why teachers did what they did and with whom. People had overlapping

⁸ MINED INFORMS

⁹ Gabinete (community association)

identities that created hybrids (Miller-Cleary, 2013). All teachers were addressed as “*Profe*”¹⁰ and they shared professional experiences, language, ways of thinking and communicating, and reasons for doing. All teachers and family members were *Segoviana* which identified them as being from the north-central mountainous region; most were also proudly *del campo*, or rural. Being literate or illiterate was an enormous part of one’s identity, as were the number of years one attended school. Other widely shared identities included being Nicaraguan, Christian or Catholic, and being either a militant¹¹ or sympathizer¹² of a political party – as a *Danielista* or *Orteguista*, Sandinista (for the Sandinista Party but not Daniel) or Liberal (opposition political party). Some people chose to avoid politics or not let it define their lives. One neighborhood businessperson explained, “I am not for any of those corrupt thieves.”^{xiv} Fluid, overlapping identities played a significant role in a teacher’s professional life; they were important to understand.

Research Participants

The core participants in this study (see Table 3) represented a cross-section of multigrade teachers and family members with varied experiences and roles. I sought maximum variation within a relatively small group of twelve core educators who participated with a larger school nucleus of 57 teachers and administrators (including the 12) and dozens of family members. These stakeholder participants worked together as they enacted different roles in their schools and communities. The core group of twelve teachers worked in five multigrade schools and the nucleus high school. During professional development, I observed them working in their nucleus school of 57 teachers who worked in 12 multigrade schools and the local high school. I also maintained regular contact with dozens of parents, mostly mothers and grandmothers of students, ten of whom I interviewed in December 2013.

After the NGO I initially coordinated with assigned me to two of their schools without warning, I purposefully expanded the number of participants by gaining entry to additional formal and informal socio-professional settings and activities. Over time, I created a purposefully heterogeneous sample of schools, teachers and parents. I also sought out local MINED officials and entry into a heretofore closed teaching-learning context in which most teachers were positioned as learners: MINED professional development (PD). Two

¹⁰ Every acting and retired teacher was “Profe” short for Professor (which meant classroom teacher)

¹¹ Un(a) militante

¹² Un(a) simpatizante

participants were teacher trainers in school nucleus PD. I describe each group of participants below and the process of gatekeepers opening and closing doors to me over two school years of field work.

Three Groups of Stakeholder Participants

All schools where participating teachers worked were located within the sub-region of San José de la Montaña. Its mountainous landscape with one main highway and many one-lane dirt roads created an informal geographical connection between two distinct groupings of schools (see Table 2). A first grouping was in the mountainous southern part of San Jose, where El Roble, Los Coquitos and La Montañita were close neighbors with each other and several other multigrade schools in the nucleus. Teachers from these schools often ran into

Table 2

Location Descriptions of Each Participating School

School Name (pseudonym)	Location Description
El Roble	12 kilometers from the nearest city, and over 1km from the major highway on a dirt road across a river. One walked through two communities, across one river that often swelled and covered the bridge built in 2011. Before 2011, the bridge was logs that would be swept away in big storms making it impassable for days.
Los Coquitos	13 kilometers from the nearest city and 2.5 kilometers from the major highway on an improved cobblestone road that led to a number of rural communities, each with their own elementary school. A bus climbed the hills daily each hour from 7am to 4pm. The ride from the city to the school was approximately 30 minutes; the principal walked to school 25 minutes through fields and one walked then rode the bus from the highway up to the school.
Los Jocotes	3 km from the southern edge of an urban center up a dirt road that led to many rural communities. An old bus lumbered up the road at about 10km/hour M,T,Th & F, making three round trips each day – on a good day. Every Wednesday it went to the mechanic and there was no service.
El Tejado	6-7 km from southern edge of main urban center (bus took teachers 4km M, T, TH, F and they walked 2-3km more; hitched rides Wednesdays). They could also take 9km bus ride with 2-3 kilometer walk to community. 2nd option was same price and took longer. I visited once and I had ongoing conversations with the two teachers at the bus stop, on buses, both interviewed.
La Montañita	17 km from the nearest city high in the mountains above Los Coquitos on the improved cobblestone road. A bus made 8 trips each day almost every hour from 7am to 4pm. The ride from the city to the school was approximately 45 minutes as the bus chugged up the steep hills at a steady slow climb and came down carefully riding its brakes. I visited once and the two teachers actively participated in PD, including the diplomado Friday sessions.

each other as they walked to and from school or when they went into town on interstate buses which ran every 20 minutes. A second grouping included Los Jocotes, El Tejado, and several other multigrade schools in the northern part of San Jose. Though these schools were physically close to the state capital (they bordered it), the schools were much more difficult to access than many of their neighbors to the south due to a poorly maintained dirt road and sporadic public transportation that operated only several times each day and only four of five school days each week. Teachers from these schools waited together at the bus stop each morning and mid-day for up to an hour, and the days the bus did not run they often sought transportation together from passing pick-ups. Profe Liria took the bus four mornings each week and walked 3-4 kilometers out to the main paved road each afternoon.

My initial entry was guided by staff from the 2-person regional office of an international non-governmental education organization (NGEO). Their central offices were located in Managua; their regional office was in the state capital on the grounds of one of two private schools run by Catholic nuns. During my first visit to San Jose, the NGO's promoter introduced me to two multigrade schools. She presented me to each principal and community Cabinet president as the NGO's volunteer promoter who would visit the entire school year and replace her. I later learned she had visited a handful of times the previous year and worked with the first/second grade combination classes only^{xv}. Despite the fact that this surprise introduction nullified our agreement to implement a more thoughtful participant selection process over the first three months of 2012, I accepted the surprise designation. I also registered my concern with their methods at the NGO offices. I then divided up most school days from February to June of 2012^{xvi} to visit the two 1st-4th grade classrooms at El Roble and three 1st – 6th grade classrooms in Los Coquitos with a focus to learn about classroom routines and interactions, and develop relationships with the six teachers at both schools. In April, I visited surrounding schools with and without the NGO promoter and met Profes Dinora and Geronima at La Montañita, Profes Murella and Pelucita at El Tejado, and Profe Liria at Los Jocotes. I maintained contact with these teachers for the rest of 2012 and all of 2013.

With the help of an assistant principal attending a math workshop, I enrolled my son at a local public high school. After we moved into the mountains in March, he transferred to the San Jose High School. I first met Profes Rosibel and Adriana, the principal and assistant

principal respectively at San Jose High School, as a parent in 2012. Though we talked about my research and many parents had children at the high school, I never thought my research would be applicable there. For all of 2012, PD was held in the state capital. Once the MINED decentralized PD and began to implement it in each school nucleus in 2013, Profes Rosibel and Adriana – and multigrade teachers Annabelle and Ludmila along with two sisters from the northern rural communities of San Jose – joined the study. Though the latter four teachers contributed to my understandings for this study, I did not consider them core participants. They participated irregularly, I observed them more than engaging in regular or in-depth conversations, and I never visited their schools or classrooms. There was not enough time.

The school nucleus of 57 multigrade and high school teachers and their administrators – including the core 12 – came from 12 multigrade schools that were neighbors and feeders into the high school. All were located on the west side of the main highway that ran through the San Jose sub-region. The nucleus teachers met for ten monthly TEPCE sessions annually. In 2013, a sub-set of nucleus teachers participated in 32 PD sessions. All but one of the multigrade teachers were women; Profe Fausto was the only man and he served as nucleus coordinator of the member multigrade schools for the MINED. About one third of the high school teachers were men (7 total). Most of the multigrade teachers had earned a teaching license. Most of the pre-school teachers had graduated from sixth grade but not high school, and more than half of the high school teachers were high school graduates with no teaching degree. This large group of teachers ranged in age from 20-65 years old, and had taught from less than one year to more than forty years. Several were on the point of retiring or had passed their retirement; one died after collapsing in class a few months before her retirement. Several joined the teaching force during the 2013 school year and several left the nucleus when they retired or transferred schools.

The third stakeholder group of participants was parents from El Roble, Los Coquitos and Los Jocotes. Teachers tended to speak of parents as “mamas” or mothers, highlighting the prevalence of mothers in school-community links with few male participants. I spoke with parents frequently while visiting schools and when I lived in San José and Los Coquitos communities in 2012. I highlight a smaller core group I interviewed. (Grand)mothers ranged in age from their 20s to their 70s and represented a cross-section of families in each community. Three served on their school’s Parent Association, and several expressed their

belief that the school teachers were in charge and the (grand)mother had no reason to involve herself in whatever happened at the school with her (grand)son or (grand)daughter. Three mothers had lived in Costa Rica and returned to be close to their children; three had a spouse, daughter or son in the U.S. or Spain sending financial support home; two mothers were unemployed single moms struggling 24/7 to make ends meet (living in extreme poverty) as temporary domestic workers for extended family members, families in the San José region, or urban clients; two were grandmothers. All the mothers had between no schooling and the beginning of 7th grade; they all spoke of not having the opportunity to continue their studies. Most families lived in multi-generational homes with up to four generations under a single roof or a shared a piece of land with separate dwellings and one water well or some other shared resource. One mother had a crippling chronic illness, another was recovering from an operation, and several fell deathly ill for extended periods but recovered. Most *mamás* suffered chronic pain they were unable to treat due to lack of funds.

Though students were not the focus of the study, I developed relationships with some parents according to issues that arose with their children. Three of the core group of parents had what teachers termed highly problematic students – male and female – who were on the verge of dropping out in their elementary years (noticeably violent, exhibited uncontrolled behaviors or did not do their schoolwork in class or at home). Three had high achieving students; two had children who had repeated grades and seemed to be on track for high school despite being over-age. Some wanted their children to continue on to the university though most said it was not possible. Four parents had transferred their child(ren) to a participating school or away due to concerns about physical security or teacher effectiveness – or both^{xvii}. Most expressed a desire to send their child(ren) to the unigraude elementary school in San Jose, but it was either too far to walk or too dangerous to cross the highway^{xviii}. I spoke frequently with the ten parents I interviewed and another three dozen I did not interview. I walked to and from school with parents and students, ran into them on buses, in the capital city, on the roads around our homes and in other people's homes during visits. Since the study focuses on teachers, I provide more detailed information about each teacher participant below.

Table 3

Teacher Participants: Ten Core Participants from Five Multigrade Schools and the Nucleus High School.

School name (pseudonym)	Grades taught	# of teachers /school	Teacher pseudonyms	Sex	Age range	Origin	Current residence	Grade levels	Unigrade experience* *	Multigrade experience	Pre-school teacher experience
El Roble	preschool, 1st-6th grades	3	Profesora Ambrosia	F	50-59	rural	rural, nr	1st-2nd	①	only	①
			Profesora Regalia	F	60+	rural	rural, nr	3rd-4th	①	√	√
			Profesor Fausto	M	60+	urban	rural, nr	5th-6th	√	√	①
Los Coquitos	preschool, 1st-6th grades	3	Profesora Reina	F	20-29	rural	rural, nr	1st-2nd	①	only	①
			Profesora Emilia	F	20-29	rural	rural, in	3rd-4th	①	only	①
			Profesora Pridi	F	20-29	rural	rural, nr	5th-6th	①	only	①
Los Jocotes	preschool, 1st-6th grades	1	Profesora Liria	F	30-39	urban	urban	1st-4th	①	only	①
El Tejado	preschool, 1st-6th grades	2	Profesora Murella	F	60+	urban	urban	1st-3rd (12); 1st, 2nd & 4th (13)	①	only	①
			Profesora Peluchita	F	40-49	urban	urban	4th - 6th (12); 3rd, 5th & 6th (13)	①	only	√

School name (pseudonym)	Teacher pseudonyms	"Vocation" or 2nd best/only option (self-report)	GOAL 2013 (cont MG, urban, retire)	# of students	Teaching experience / Retirement info	Preparation	Diplomado 2013 Participation	Principal experience
El Roble	Profesora Ambrosia	vocation	Retire	32	28 years (retired in 2015)	normal school	No	15 years at El Roble
	Profesora Regalia	vocation (pre-school)	Retire soon	24	9 years in elem (retire w/o benefits - age)	preschool	No	None
	Profesor Fausto	vocation	Retire soon	22	30+ years (retired in 2015)	normal school + diplomados + tons of trainings	yes / Lvl II	6 years at El Roble; Unknown # of years at large elem (1k+ studs) in city
Los Coquitos	Profesora Reina	2nd best	Continue MG	15	8 years (2012)	normal school + diplomados + trainings	Dropped	first year
	Profesora Emilia	2nd best	Quit	20	1st year (2012)	normal school	Yes	none
	Profesora Pridi	2nd best	Continue MG	24	2nd year (2012)	normal school	Yes	none
Los Jocotes	Profesora Liria	2nd best	Urban	16	10 years (2013)	normal school + most undergrad	Dropped	second year
El Tejado	Profesora Murella	vocation	Retire soon		26 years (will retire in 2017)	Normal school	Yes	3 yrs at El Tejado, 10+ yrs at Sn Luis
	Profesora Peluchita	vocation (pre-school)	urban		2nd year (2013)	preschool + Normal Sat.	Yes	none

Table 4

Family Participants: Those Interviewed and with whom I Had Informal Conversations on a Regular Basis

School name (pseudonym)	Parent pseudonyms	Parent Association Committee	Active/Bene- ficiary of local Sandinista organization	Extreme Poverty	Education Level	Partner/child working in exterior	Main source of income
El Roble	Maritza	No	No	√	No formal schooling	No	Odd Jobs, unemployed
	Yolet	√	√	√	6th grade	No	Farming
	Angelita	No	√	No	6th grade	No	Farming
	Grandma Estebana	No	No	No	No formal schooling	√	Family support, Remittances
Los Coquitos	Grandma/ grandpa	No	No	No	6th grade & no formal schooling	√	Farming, remittances
	Dad / store owner	No	No	No	High school graduate	No	Community Store, Teaching HS
Los Jocotes	Adriana	√	√	No	6th grade	√	Remittances
	Karolina	No	√	√	No formal schooling	No	Family support – disabled
	Grandma	No	No	√	No formal schooling	√	Family support, Remittances
	Ma/Ma (sisters)	√	√	√	6th grade	No (Worked in Costa Rica)	Domestic odd Jobs, often unemployed

Gatekeepers and Gatekeeping: Participants Entering, Leaving and Changing Roles

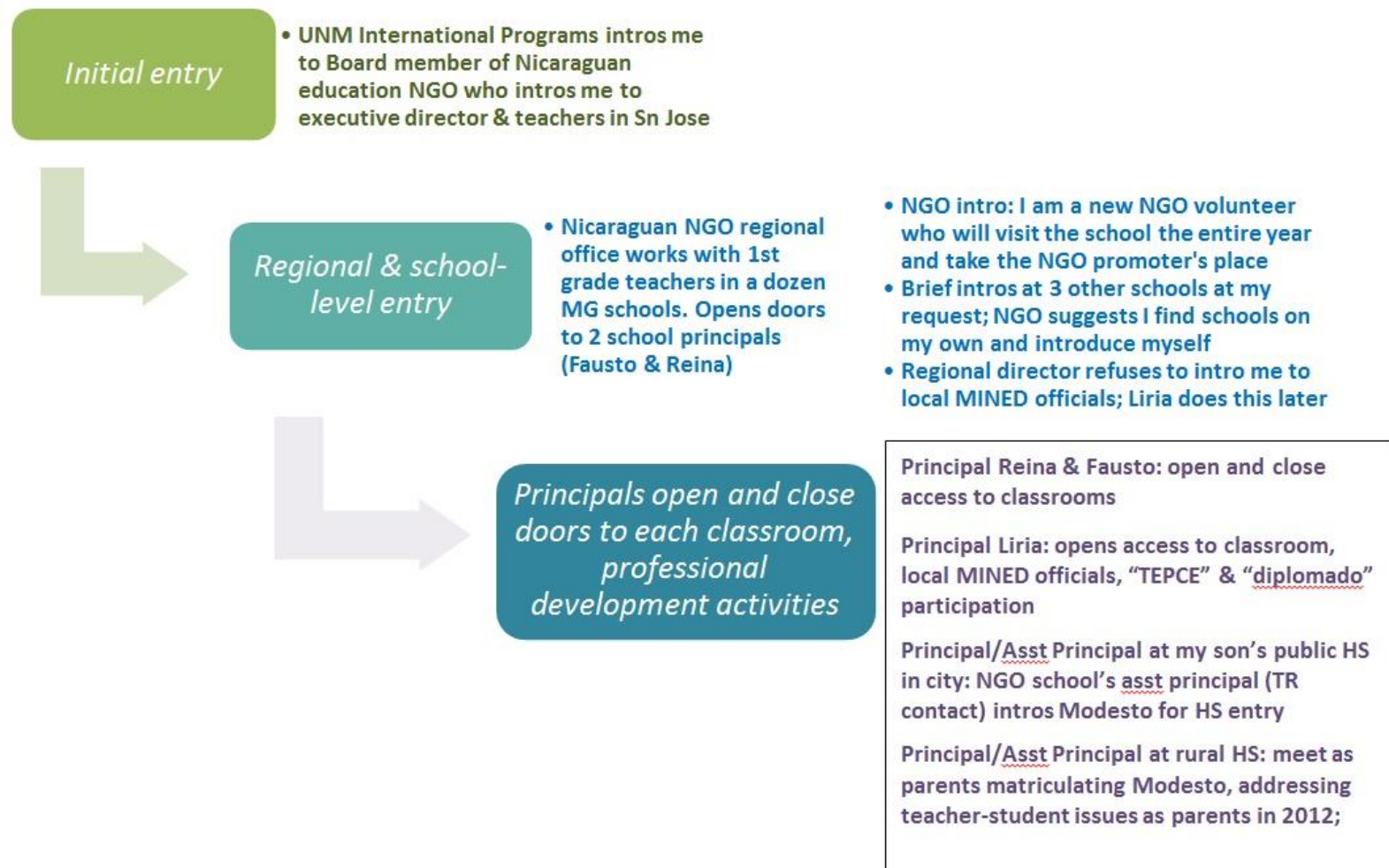
Long distance communication between Albuquerque and the regional Nicaraguan NGE0 offices was a challenge in 2011. I had erroneously assumed that the regional director, Elien, did not have easy access to internet and this caused the 1-3 month delays in each round of correspondence. When my family and I arrived in January 2012, Elien had not provided information about potential schools for our 15-year old son or housing possibilities despite my repeated requests. On my first day in the office, she informed me there was no space at any high school for my son, public or private. She also erroneously told me that enrollment had closed in October 2011. A few weeks after presenting me to El Roble and Los Coquitos leaders as the NGE0 promoter, Elien confided that they were “two of our worst schools” that in their internal grading categorization were “D” schools (A was the highest rating and D the lowest). She laughed with her promoter about how the previous year the promoter had “returned to the office crying after each visit.”¹³

On one trip into the city in April 2012, I met with Elien. At her request, I described some teaching methods, use of resources and other behaviors I had observed in the two schools. She stood up, raising her arms in the air and the pitch of her voice, demanding “we” denounce the teachers to the local MINED *Delegada*. I told her I could not do that. Any denouncement of teachers, I said, went against our agreements and my work with the teachers. It would torpedo relationships I was building. She insisted, saying the teachers were not fulfilling their commitment and the MINED had to know. The NGO director had agreed to introduce me to the Municipal MINED *Delegada* in January and had postponed our meeting several times. After I refused to denounce the teachers, I never raised the topic again. I knew the NGE0 had to protect its relationship with the MINED (a Board member told me as much as well), and I deferred to De Nike (2002) when he wrote, “during periods of extreme social instability and far-reaching change...the ordinary pitfalls of fieldwork are increased manifold” (An Ethnographic Approach section, para. 1). I respected the door closed by the NGE0 and chose not to introduce myself to MINED staff in the municipal offices until the end of that year when everyone knew I was divorced from the NGE0.

¹³ Pobrecita, regresó a la oficina llorando después de cada visita, ¿verdad? (she looks at the promoter and laughs).

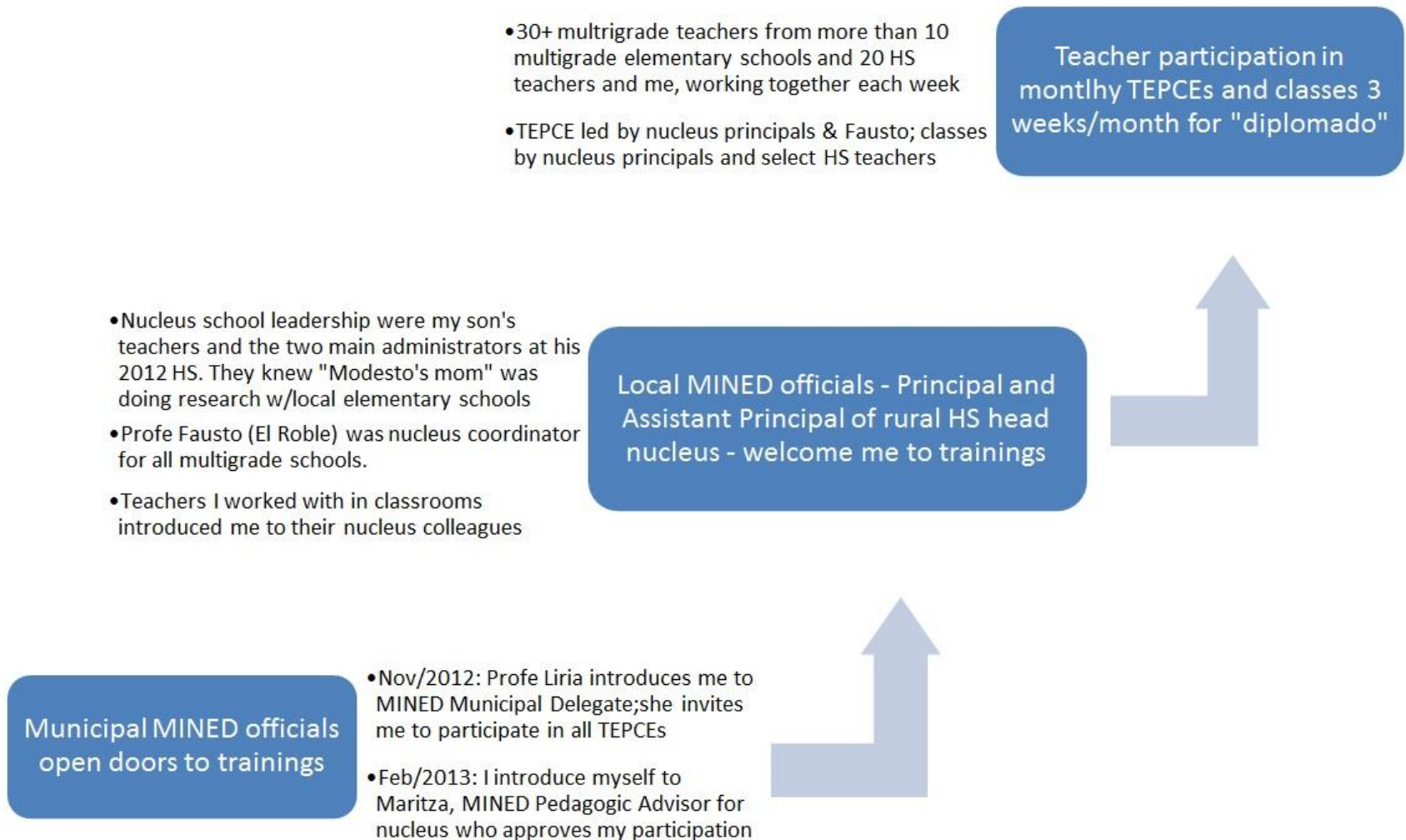
The first three months of coordination with NGEО staff raised serious ethical questions about staff knowledge of research and my research study in particular.^{xix} In April, I reached an agreement with the NGEО regional director to continue on my own.^{xx} Though she agreed to inform school principals of the change, she did not do so before she was replaced several months later. By the time of our split, I lived in San Jose, had visited ten multigrade schools, knew over a dozen multigrade teachers and was a parent of a San Jose High student.

My relationships with local school principals and teachers – as both an educator and researcher – opened new doors to me as the study progressed. Profe Liria introduced me to the Municipal MINED *Delegada* in November 2012 at the final TEPCE of the year. Though the *Delegada* was leaving her position to become vice-Mayor, she invited me to participate in all TEPCEs and PD the next year. Profe Rosibel, the high school principal, welcomed me in February 2013 to all TEPCEs and PD sessions at her nucleus school. Profes Rosibel and Fausto helped cement my relationships with Adriana and the other PD co-facilitator, Profe Elmer, an English teacher. I came to know several pedagogic advisors through TEPCE and *diplomado* meetings, and I also saw how school principals and nucleus leaders were Municipal MINED spokespeople when pedagogic advisors were not present. The relationships I built over time helped open doors and understandings from multiple perspectives and in different contexts, as shown in Graph 4.1. The top green and blue boxes represent school level and NGEО gatekeepers who helped negotiate my access to spaces, participation and understandings with people and institutions. The bottom purple boxes represent MINED spaces and people who helped negotiate my access into their more private world^{xxi} or orientations and supervision.



Two page process map shows how gatekeepers developed throughout the study. Page 1 shows the initial local gatekeepers that were introduced to me by a regional NGO. Page 2 shows how school principals I met and worked with in 2012 (as researcher and parent) opened doors to MINED officials and official professional development spaces, particularly monthly TEPCE meetings and the diplomado.

Figure 1. *Gatekeepers and Doors they Opened and Closed during Fieldwork, 2012 and 2013.*



Research Methods

In this section, I describe methods I used and methodological decisions I made during my ethnographic field work and beyond as I collected and analyzed data in multiple ways (participant observation, informal conversations and interviews, documents and artifacts), from multiple sources (teachers, local MINED leaders and parents), in multiple settings (classrooms in all content, school meetings, community gatherings, people's homes, on streets and in buses, and PD settings) over two consecutive school years. I took Wolcott's (2008) advice and availed myself "of the widest possible range of techniques, rather than rely too exclusively on single sources of data" (Chapter 9, Does it Matter Whether or Not It's Ethnography section, para. 3). This was necessary to understand diversity within and across multigrade classrooms and how teachers negotiated this diversity in broader contexts in which they operated. The variation in multigrade settings that I sought to understand – and that makes comparison of policy-oriented multigrade schooling studies unfeasible (McEwan, 2008) – will contribute to filling a gap in research about what goes on inside multigrade classrooms and why (Little, 1995; Veenman, 1995; Veenman, 1996). Findings here also respond to a widespread fallacy in governance and research that generalizes multigrade classrooms and schools, or rural schools and teachers, as a homogenous group. Rather than compare differences between multigrade and unigrade schooling, or rural and urban, I looked at differences within multigrade schools and teachers to offer "multi-layered accounts with many voices" (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2007, p. 198). My choice of an ethnographic approach to study socio-psychological aspects of teaching and learning builds upon and extends findings from the more common input-output research design used in educational psychology research on teacher beliefs and knowledge (Butler, 2006; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Phoenix, 1994; Ponterotto, 2013).

I begin with a methodological review of input-output research, its findings and evolving acknowledgement about the importance of understanding how teacher enactment and use of beliefs and knowledge in practice is often context dependent. This lays the foundation for understanding my ethnographic approach.

Input-output approaches: A methodological assessment. Educational psychology research often uses participant self-reports to isolate and study individual beliefs or knowledge, related sub-components, trajectories of development among these, antecedents

and/or consequences. Some studies compare these aspects in expert and novice teachers, defined most often in relation to years of experience. Questionnaires and interview protocols are usually pre-developed by researchers based on pre-defined constructs from existing models and theories even though teachers often use different language to explain their beliefs, knowledge and belief-knowledge systems.

Input-output designs in which researchers hypothesize relationships between measurable inputs and expected outputs or outcomes predominate. Teacher inputs include elements regarding a teacher's background (e.g., years of teaching experience, certification or licensure level, and education level or attainment) and one or two beliefs or knowledge. Outputs include a set of quantifiable teacher practices, motivation measures or socio-emotional factors or beliefs (often with less than one dozen questions per construct), or student performance whose most valued measure is standardized test scores (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008).

Input-output designs have provided concurrent listings of teacher beliefs, knowledge and practices grouped into general categories used in professional development and teacher evaluation. Though it reiterates that beliefs, knowledge and practice work together, it has not systematically analyzed relationships among teacher cognitions and practice or how teachers use them in different situations under conflicting pressures, e.g., the daily classroom.

A common method in effective teaching research is to study effective teachers to identify their beliefs, knowledge and practices. This literature presents universal best practices packaged in categories for PD and teacher evaluation. It also tends to ignore context-dependency, e.g., an expert teacher in one setting can be a novice in another (Obidah & Teel, 2001). This body of research does not explain how teachers use their knowledge and belief systems flexibly according to constantly changing classroom contexts and influences including school, district, state and national policies and curriculum. It rarely looks at how and why teachers make decisions in their practice, prioritizing certain beliefs and knowledge over others in different situations. Few effective teaching studies approach teaching and learning as occurring in speech or discourse communities through a valued language and communicative competencies defined by policy makers, curricular designers, school administrators and teachers – and often contradict with those of students and families. Few approach effective teaching from language, communication and literacy perspectives despite

schooling relying heavily on literacy skills and interactions that require certain linguistic and communicative competencies. A more nuanced and context-dependent understanding of relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practices across multiple contexts will add to this research.

By its very nature, input-output research tends to omit or dismiss the teacher and students inside the classroom as necessary to study and understand. It does not include systematic classroom observations to balance or check against information collected through self-reporting or one-time interviews. The classroom remains a mysterious “black box” (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Researchers have not observed what teachers and students are doing, when or why they do it, and how their interactions change over time and contexts (Black and Wiliam, 1998). The reliance on one-time self-reported data offers no avenue or teacher-researcher relationship to evaluate if, when or how teacher responses represent an imagined future self or what they think the researcher wants to hear more than what a teacher does, knows or believes (Fives & Buehler, 2012).

As a principal data analysis method, input–output studies rely on statistical averages. Averages ignore and marginalize individuality as unimportant and something to control for (Rose, 2016). They confound understanding two central components to teaching and learning: complexity and flexibility. Teachers make hundreds of decisions every day, using what they know and believe about learning, their students, the content and a combination of external factors as they plan, instruct and evaluate learning. Data analysis through averages requires researchers to discard outliers or individual participants who deviate too far from the statistical norm. Participants deemed outliers are not studied because they are believed to introduce a detrimental effect on analyses (skewing results) and thus are an obstacle to substantive findings.

These research design preferences in input-output research contribute to a gap in understanding the confluence of environmental and cognitive factors that teachers balance each day and over each school year as they teach different content with a large number of students who have varying needs and resources. In the last decade and in conjunction with paradigm shifts in curriculum and teaching-learning approaches to math, reading, writing and science, education research has begun to study the contextualized nature of relationships among teacher knowledge-beliefs-practices. Researchers want to understand how teacher

beliefs about teaching and learning (in general) interact or influence teacher beliefs and practice in specific content areas. There is much to understand.

We know little about how beliefs filter multiple and multi-dimensional factors in embedded contexts or how a person can or does control the level of filtering due to competing internal and external factors. We know little about how beliefs nest or how teachers use systems of beliefs differently in different contexts (Fives & Buehl, 2012). We know little about how school cultures and other external micro factors like curricular reforms hinder or inspire teacher expressions of certain beliefs systems. Research on teachers struggling with curricular reforms and paradigm shifts in math and language arts have fueled more research in these directions. Studying simultaneous combinations of micro contexts (e.g., school environment, curricular influences) and macro contexts with teacher cognitions that together influence teacher practice need further study (Fives & Buehl, 2012). This study seeks to contribute to some of these new directions regarding relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice in different, changing and often overlapping contexts by using four data collection methods and ongoing data analysis.

In the rest of the chapter, I describe decisions I made in and out of the field as data collection and analysis progressed along with my understandings of teacher decision-making and interplays among external and internal factors. The roles I played as a participant-observer with the diversity of participants and data sources helped me gather the kinds and amount of data I needed to answer my questions. My observations along a participant observation continuum informed and were informed by my inquiries during informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with teachers. Archival documents and classroom and community artifacts added to this cyclical process of data collection and analysis. Though I separate each method below to describe and delineate my reasons for using them, I did not implement them in a linear or time-dependent fashion.

Four data collection methods. I began this research with a purposefully open-ended main question: “How do teacher beliefs and knowledge about learning relate with teacher practice?” This beginning point allowed me to investigate broadly and follow where teachers led in a data collection and analysis process that was “both summative and generative” (Chaple, 2010, p. 284). As I collected data, my ongoing analyses raised new questions and took me in new directions, at times with new people and other data sources or new settings. I

had expected to focus on a handful of classrooms in two or three communities, and develop relationships with teachers and community residents over one school year. I began by placing particular attention on teacher actions and perspectives because teachers planned, implemented and evaluated teaching-learning processes and they were held accountable for low student performance. This almost exclusive blame on teachers was normalized because it was logical, but it was not supported by research. Researchers cite how little people really know and understand about what exactly teachers do in classrooms, and how it inculcates poor student learning (or if teachers are, in fact, the main people responsible). This seemingly logical argument that had no classroom evidence to support it provided justification for an ethnographic approach that privileged the voices of a small group of teachers in rural multigrade schools in Central Nicaragua.

As I began my field work, I investigated with a panoramic view of the San Jose region and its schools, taking into account historic trends and events into the present. I then began school visits that provided a microscopic view initially of routines, physical environments and classroom interactions. I continued to take an intermittently narrow-broad-narrow approach (Fetterman, 2010) that allowed me breadth and depth of understanding. It enabled me to “portray the cultural landscape in detail rich enough for others to comprehend and appreciate” (p. 39). At this point in the study, I was not interested in the government in teachers’ lives. I wanted to study the uniqueness of each individual person in detail to understand something much greater from that detail. Though I knew the MINED played a key role in teacher preparation and development, I wanted to study teachers. To me, the MINED and the state seemed far from my interest in teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice, “divorced from the cluttered social history of individuals and groups at particular moments in time and space” (De Nike, 2002, Conclusion section, para. 7).

Several months into my research, I realized I needed to pan out past the participating schools and communities. Through my observations and work with teachers in classrooms and conversations with family members, I heard repeatedly about changing MINED policies, required procedures regarding planning and the curriculum, punitive supervision without pedagogical accompaniment, endless waves of orientations flowing from higher ups, and often idealistic MINED expectations or public propaganda and politicization of schooling. Teachers regularly expressed frustration at the lack of support they felt from the MINED and

its meddling and politicization in areas it should not interject. Many expressed a desire for more pedagogic support to help their students learn, and concerns that many MINED policies actually worked against that goal and made their practice more difficult – and student learning even slower. These outside influences saturated teachers' thoughts and conversations. They were present in much of their decision-making and practice. Over time, I saw how teachers managed multiple and changing pressures not just in the classroom with students but outside the classroom with colleagues, families and community leaders, MINED officials, First Lady Murillo's public announcements, local Town Hall figures, and other government agency personnel. I realized that I had to understand these broader contexts and the ways they entered into each teacher's professional life (Wolcott, 2008). I expanded my initial focus to look at how national decisions became local and a part of teachers' daily lives (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2007).

I also heard a consensus in schools that the government was responsible for education and schooling. Teachers spoke of how the normative, centralized schooling system provided an exceedingly structured, proceduralized and controlled environment while at the same time seeding instability, unpredictability and contradictions. Ortega's government responded to crises by constantly changing or tweaking policies, demanding loyal compliance under threat of punishment, and requiring public servants to implement Sandinista-imposed values activities in a nationally coordinated and articulated manner, often beginning in school communities. Teachers used their individual knowledge and beliefs to understand and act upon institutional orientations and the beliefs embedded in government programs, orientations and curricular materials. Understanding how teachers used their beliefs and knowledge in practice was more than understanding the behavior and cognitive processes within one individual over time and in comparison with other individuals – and mostly in relation to academic content. It was also part of ongoing social and institutional interactions and expectations, social learning processes, and other environmental influences, all of which mediated individual and shared knowledge and beliefs.

A self-report survey or one interview could not begin to provide enough data to understand this complexity. It required an ethnographic approach, working with teachers in their classroom, school and community environments, being in multiple sites working with participants on a daily basis, helping them teach while observing their teaching, talking with

them before and after school, during recess, getting to know students and family members – all over an extended period of time. My deepening understandings led me to seek out and gain access to teacher PD to observe teacher interactions with colleagues and local MINED officials so I did not have to rely on teacher reporting. I was then able to compare across teachers, elementary school classrooms and teacher PD. I began to see parallels between instruction in PD and instruction in elementary classrooms as well as teacher behaviors as students in PD and teacher behaviors as teachers of their young elementary students, and their behaviors. I adapted my methods as my understandings deepened – and as I continued my broad-narrow-broad analysis.

This process also helped me identify the four focus areas of this study: values education, instructional planning, mathematics and language arts. These comprised the main emphasis of government officials and teachers in discourse, programs, ongoing verbal orientations, supervision and time. They consumed most multigrade teachers' attention. They also provided an extensive panorama for understanding how and why teachers used different combinations of knowledge and beliefs to negotiate constantly changing external influences as they decided how to put certain mandates and expectations into practice in their classrooms and in interactions with colleagues, students, parents and community residents. I collected data using four complementary methods:

- 1) Classroom observations,
- 2) Informal conversations and semi-structured interviews,
- 3) Primary and secondary documents, and
- 4) Classroom and community artifacts.

I explain each of these below in separate sub-sections even though I used them together as one integrated package to address questions or areas of focus as they arose.

Classroom participant observation. Classroom observation has become a standard method for understanding and assessing teaching-learning processes in classrooms in many parts of the world (Gleeson, 2014). Participant observation, a principal method in ethnographic approaches, involves “establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting” (Emerson et al., 2011, p.352). It is an “immersion in a culture” that “sets the stage for more refined techniques” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 37),

allowing the researcher to begin to understand cultural interactions, language, actions and beliefs in a community while at the same time defining new points of interest to study and understand further. Primary school classrooms are mostly private realms that are busy, at times chaotic, where teachers in the U.S. make hundreds of decisions and have over 1000 exchanges each day with their students. These dynamic environments make classroom observation a huge challenge (Wragg, 2012).

My participant observation during this study ranged along a continuum from pure observation to full participation and many combinations in between. Once I gained access into each community, I became immersed in it for an extended period. I wrote notes and personal reflections throughout the school day in a Spanglish shorthand. I recorded exact words and grammatical structures in shorthand to capture patterned language, metaphors, and other language functions, forms and ways of speaking. I relied on handwritten notes because my digital recorder and camera caused too much commotion and distraction the two times I took them to two schools. I decided what they provided me was not worth the cost. Invariably a group of students in every classroom was “off-task” and electronic equipment that was out of the ordinary encouraged more off-task behavior.

I kept all my field notes in hardbound books that were strong enough to withstand the constant wear and tear they suffered as I lugged them everywhere under all kinds of climatological and physical conditions. Because I filled each notebook every few months, I developed a collection of different sizes, colors and textures. Students would often take a break from work or play to sit next to me and ask, “What are you copying?”¹⁴ as they tried to read my shorthand. Many students loved to write in them, add stickers in the margins or draw pictures during class or recess.

Since “writing always functions more as a filter than a mirror reflecting the ‘reality’ of events” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 46), I expanded on my notes after school and on weekends. In these longer field notes, I reconstructed my in-the-moment construction of actions and behaviors I observed, and feelings and meanings I associated with these. My writings provided an initial analysis and interpretation through my choice of words, content focus, and organization as I represented my version of events. Though they had “little or no over-all coherence or consistency” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) but more a partial

¹⁴ ¿Qué está copiando?

narrative of some of the day's interactions and events. Each day's notes contained "bits and pieces of incidents, beginnings and ends of narratives, accounts of chance meetings and rare occurrences, and details of a wide range of unconnected matters" (p. 353) while the growing corpus of writings began to represent multiple aspects of teachers' lives and perspectives.

Where my actions fell on the participant observer spectrum depended on the research focus or goals for each day, the roles teachers defined for me upon my arrival and personal influences including my values, personality and interests (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). During an entry phase February to May in 2012, I tried to maintain a role of "participant as observer" (Glesne, 2006) as long as possible. For most classrooms, this was not long because teachers wanted to me to work rather than sit and take notes. On my first visit to Liria's classroom, for example, she had me first be co-PE teacher followed by working with her first and second graders in language arts while she taught third and fourth together. I was able to observe when I specifically asked, when we determined a focus together (e.g., questioning), or when students were working on an assignment and going to her with questions. When I observed, I took field notes from the back or one side of the classroom "to record as fully as possible the context of education in that class" (Fife, 1997, p. 95). I played more of an observer role during parent meetings, school events and PD.

I also realized quickly that it was less intrusive to incorporate myself into the elementary school day than to sit at a desk writing notes. I began walking around the classroom to check on student work; direct students to a task (e.g., to get out their notebooks or sharpen their pencils); help students transition into an exercise; check answers and provide feedback; and otherwise help the teacher. By April 2012, I was usually an "observer as participant" (Glesne, 2006) in all classrooms. My participation varied each day. All teachers welcomed me as an educational assistant, and I often worked with a grade of students after the teacher gave them an assignment on the board or walked among all grades offering help when students asked. I also co-taught with five teachers – teaching lessons together, rotating who taught or separating grades to each teach one or two grades at the same time. I taught lessons in all grades in math, language arts, natural sciences, social studies and PE.^{xxii} When we split grades, I sometimes had a classroom for my students (e.g., El Roble library). Usually, though, the teacher and I would each teach at opposite ends of the classroom with

student desks facing towards their respective grades' board. I substitute taught for two teachers at one school when they arrived late to school or left early.

For most participant observations I arrived before classes began. I often arrived with a teacher or group of students, and left with teachers or students once school (or PD) was dismissed. Due to variations in the classroom day, I observed between 2.5 and 5 hours each observation. I observed 129 school days and 22 PD sessions for a total of 151 days; my notes reflected almost 600 hours of teaching and learning.

Table 5

Number of Days of Classroom and Professional Development Participant Observations by Teacher and School Semester

By semester each year	El Roble		Los Jocotes	Los Coquitos			TEPCE	Other PD 2013	MINED/ UNAN 2013
Teachers	Flor	Rosa	Liria	Reina	Emilia	Pridi	50+	50+	50+
February – July 2012	23	12	4	11	8	18	1	0	N/A
July – December 2012	9	4	14	0	0	0	1	0	N/A
February – July 2013	5	2	20	0	0	0	3	4	3
July – December 2013	6*	6	5	0	0	0	4	0	6
TOTALS	43 days	24 days	43 days	11 days	8 days	18 days	9 sessions	4 sessions	9 sessions

*includes one CO with a substitute teacher (Flor's nephew's fiancé)

Teachers and principals invited me to attend other school activities, including school assemblies (El Roble), recess, parent meetings and special celebrations. At the principal's

request in El Roble, I spent several days with 5th and 6th graders in 2012 and 2013 organizing the school library which he then put me in charge of using as well. I attended local events that were part of the MINED's decentralization of values education, like Mother's Day and a cultural expression celebration at the nucleus school. I also participated in spontaneous before and after school happenings such as cleaning and breaking up student fights.

In most PD sessions I observed more than participated. In the large group during opening reflections, a radio conference or when everyone had their notebooks open, I kept my notebook open and jotted freely. When PD broke into small groups, I stayed with a somewhat fluid group that usually included most of my core group of teachers and a few others. I opened my notebook infrequently and usually only to write an exact quote or key words. When the group answered questions and we had a PD document, I would often write on my copy. I would then fill out my notes during breaks or immediately upon our dismissal. In five workshops I became more an "observer as participant" in our small group when the teachers answering questions from the document invited me to help them while others worked on just-announced reports due that same day or talked quietly in pairs. I never took an audio recorder to PD; I took photos once to document the physical environment.

Informal conversations and semi-structured interviews. Throughout Nicaragua, face-to-face communication was prevalent and informal, spontaneous conversations were a norm. Asking lots of questions was not. I learned in the first months that listening to others' off-the-cuff conversations was more fruitful than asking questions directly. As my relationships with teachers, students and family members deepened, I began to ask some questions directly but found that getting to a point slowly, over time, in different ways was still the best option – both to engage in conversation and to get answers. When a question made someone uncomfortable or derailed a conversation, I set it aside for further investigation at some other time or figured out how to approach it in other ways.

Informal conversations were as much guided by my ongoing analysis as they guided it. Sometimes, I would ask one or more people about something I had recently seen or heard in a participant observation. Other times I raised questions or comments about a MINED document or media article I had read. As I identified themes, interesting sayings, discrepancies in perceptions or points of view, repetitive interactions, slogans or phrasings, I asked about them whenever I could strike up a conversation – at my initiative or someone

else's. In this way, I clarified terms and got clear understandings of multiple perceptions. Accounts and explanations from one person regularly changed over time as our relationships and experiences evolved, and as we interacted in different settings with different people.

Informal conversations were always casual and usually unsolicited or unplanned. They could be vague or quite pointed, short or long-winded, curt or warm. They occurred in and out of the classroom with teachers and parents – during recess, cleaning the classroom, walking to or from school, at a community event, on the bus, waiting at a bus stop. I had longer conversations with four core teachers because of our walks to and from school and recess time. I also visited several teachers and families in their homes. Informal conversations with parents occurred when I walked to and from school with them, or when they came to school to watch or pick up their children, when I visited their homes, and when we waited together for a bus or traveled on one.

Informal conversations occurred with other teachers outside the classroom as well. Teachers drew upon an informal network of professional support with colleagues in out-of-school and in-PD interactions. These included telephone conversations with teacher-friends about an upcoming report or issues with the municipal warehouse (e.g., a school food shipment), and spontaneous conversations at Municipal MINED offices when teachers waited to present written reports or plans, or at bus stops and on buses in transit. PD included many informal conversations, before and after sessions as well as during group work or transitions. I got to know Murella and Pelucita in large part because we shared the same bus route as well as the wait for the bus in the morning and afternoon. They would share stories about students or MINED officials with Liria and me, about pedagogic advisors or a recent *orientación*, or ask Liria to give verbal messages to a family member of students who lived in Los Jocotes (about an upcoming parent meeting, a school event, an overdue payment or a disciplinary issue). I road with the same teachers heading to the Saturday *diplomado* sessions at the San Jose High School in 2013. Depending on the day, time and setting, one could chat for more than 40 minutes while waiting for a bus or during extended transitions at PD.

Due to their nature, I often had no direct notes from informal conversations. I reconstructed them later at home or on the bus once we parted ways. I used informal conversations to help me ferret out discrepancies in beliefs and decisions, and reasons for these. Because they occurred regularly over a two-year period while I was engaging in

ongoing analysis, they helped reduce researcher bias. They were an integral method in my systematic questioning of the data in my ongoing analysis, interpretations and reactions. Informal conversations helped me test and “discover the best manner of interpreting whatever data we have, and to collect further data that enable us to develop and check our inferences” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 5, Unsolicited and solicited oral accounts section, para. 14).

The data I collected across all four methods and sources – and my ongoing analysis – informed my preparation for interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and I took several months to plan for them. I designed my protocol of questions into several categories: teaching and teachers; learning, memory and forgetting; students, family, the MINED and NGOs; and multigrade schooling (see Appendix C for interview protocols).

I purposefully interviewed participants at the end of the study (between August and December 2013) to help me further organize and check on my understandings about teacher and family perspectives regarding teaching, learning, and external influences and pressures on teachers. I also postponed interviews because I had many trepidations about them. I took my time to ensure they would be helpful (and necessary) and not hurtful to the relationships I had worked so hard to build. Methodologically, I was unconvinced an interview would provide substantially different information from the data I had collected over 18 months of informal conversations and observations. I had hundreds of pages of data. Interviews were a common and widely known form of interaction in U.S. society and highly valued as a research method. After years of working in Central America, I questioned their cultural relevance and found little research by northern academic scholars who gave credence to cross-cultural issues using this method (Walford, 2007). I refused to place participants in a situation that could make them uncomfortable or reinforce unequal power dynamics, like having them answer questions I deemed important or putting them on the spot. I also did not want to unconsciously foster any inclination in which they might feel the need to please, or say what they thought I (or the MINED) wanted them to say, or to not want to critique a person or program. I knew teachers were constantly nervous about how they appeared to MINED officials. I did not want to inadvertently contribute to raising any perceptions or examples of teachers contradicting or not complying with MINED orders or expectations (e.g., attitudes or values). I cringed at the thought of unnecessarily putting any teachers or

family members in a situation in which their views, practice, or knowledge could be twisted or challenged by others – resulting in punishment.

Table 6

Interview Information by Participant Name, School, Setting, Date and Length.

Who participated*	From which school or community	Where we talked	When we talked, 2013	How long (hr:min:sec)
Profe Adriana	Nucleus HS	a porch at the HS	August	56:14
Profe Rosa Dulce	La Sigua	her backyard	August	1:29:35
Profe Don Bosco	La Sigua	his classroom	September	3:01:01
Profe Flor del Rio	La Sigua	the school library	September	1:53:56
Profe Pelucita	El Quebracho	my house	October	1:51:22
Profe Roqueza	Los Jocotes	my house	October	2:04:31
Profe Rosaura	El Tejado	PD classroom	December	1:00:57
Profe Teodoro	HS cerca de Los Coquitos	his house	July	57:12
Mama Mari	La Sigua	her aunt's porch	November	59:08
Mama Jayli	Los Jocotes	her kitchen	November	42:23
Mama Bianca	Los Jocotes	her backyard	December	1:08:45
Mama Kylie	Los Jocotes	her house	December	41:35
Abuelita Francisca	Los Jocotes	her house	December	25:00
Mama Isabel	La Sigua	porch of her house	December	39:10
Mama Yolanda	La Sigua	her house	December	1:07:12
Abuelita Estela	La Sigua	porch of her house	December	40:51

*Teachers chose their interview pseudonym; I provided a pseudonym for each (grand)mother

I addressed these professional concerns in several ways. First, I framed interviews as one more learning opportunity, similar to the way I approached all other aspects of my research. This required conscious planning to explicitly overcome power imbalances inherent to traditional interview settings. Second, I developed a system of additional permissions and review in addition to the one IRB consent before the interview^{xxiii}. These included a review of transcripts and multiple opportunities to change or clarify responses, which no one did. Third, participants chose where to do their interview and for how long (see Table 6). We did interviews at schools (El Roble teachers and Adriana), my home (Liria and Pelucita), a TEPCE session (Murella) and in peoples' homes (Regalia and all family interviews). Ambrosia and Murella appeared nervous at times and consistently provided concise answers or forgot what they wanted to say. Fausto, Pelucita and Liria were loquacious and often got emotional while talking about their professional lives.

After reviewing and signing a consent, I began teacher interviews by asking them to create a map similar to the solar system, with planets representing the people, organizations and groups that helped them achieve their objectives. In his interview, Fausto coined my efforts an "attempt to map the education system." I asked each teacher to explain her or his map as they drew during our recorded conversations. I guided us through protocol questions in the order that flowed from the conversation. We usually ended with my asking what they would request from the MINED if they had the Delegate's ear, what they thought was vital for me to understand in order to understand their profession and multigrade teaching, and if they had any questions for me. All the teachers agreed to a taped interview^{xxiv} except the three teachers from Los Coquitos. Family interviews began with less questions though some conversations were quite in-depth.^{xxv} Themes were similar.

I listened to each interview repeatedly and transcribed each personally. Transcription took on average 11 hours per one hour of tape, except interviews with unusual background noise. Profe Flor de Rio's interview, for example, included recess chatter, screaming and other noise that often overpowered her soft voice. In two mama interviews, dog fights broke out nearby that impeded audibility of the conversation for up to two minutes. These extra challenges made transcription exceptionally slow going. Because Spanish is not my first language, I had a fully bilingual Salvadoran-American whose first language is Spanish check and correct each transcription. He successfully deciphered some areas I labeled "inaudible,"

double checked areas I highlighted in yellow as suspect, and corrected parts I transcribed incorrectly. I then listened to the audio with the transcript once more.

Once this triple checking was finished, I began my transcription analysis. I did not translate transcriptions into English due to time constraints though I did translate sections related to themes I analyzed and while writing and choosing excerpts. Though translation contributes to data analysis, my Spanish is sufficiently fluent to code in Spanish and English. I used both when analyzing interviews, documents and artifacts. Some would argue that it would be better to code in the language in which the data collection occurred; I have not found research on this aspect of coding and analysis, but would venture that it depends on one's levels of bilingual skills as well.

Primary and secondary documents. Primary documents for this study came mostly from the Ministry of Education and other government offices or websites. “Many of the social settings we study are self-documenting” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 6, Documents and other artefacts, real and virtual, introduction, para. 1), with participants and institutions producing, publishing and disseminating written constructions that demonstrate their professed roles, their activities, their approaches and aspirations, and their underlying theories or beliefs about these. The MINED and presidency were prolific in publishing written documents, photos, and individual stories. MINED INFORMA on the MINED website published an average of seven articles each day about MINED activities.

All written documents complemented observations, conversations and interviews that helped me understand challenges and external influences on teacher decision-making. Like all data I collected, written documents were “partial, and reflect the interests and perspective of their authors. They are not to be privileged over other sources of information, but nor are they to be discounted” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 6, Types of document (sic) and their uses section, para. 17). Written documents were particularly helpful in helping me understand MINED and government perspectives, messaging and aspirations.

I also received written information and documents from non-governmental organizations, the two major Nicaraguan newspapers and Jesuit University of Central America (UCA) monthly journal, *Revista Envío: Política, Sociedad, Cultura, Economía*.¹⁵ Most of the MINED documents were published between 2009 and 2013. They included

¹⁵ Journal Envío: Politics, Society, Culture, Economy

annual school calendars; curricular design, guides and textbooks; professional development documents from 2000 to 2013; MINED strategic and annual plans; MINED INFORMA articles from 2012 and 2013; website program descriptions; and other policy documents. I got 2008 demographic data from the local Town Hall regarding the region and San Jose de la Montana sub-region. I found more in-depth data in education and socio-economic development from multilateral agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The “State of the Union Program” based out of Costa Rica provided socio-economic data not easily available from the Ortega government, though Nicaragua had more absent data than its neighbors.

Much of this data and databases provided historical understandings and perspectives into the present. Though I was concerned with the accuracy of many MINED and media reports – many of which were regularly questioned by educators and opposition figures – I came to also understand that “as important as the accuracy or objectivity of an account is what it reveals about the teller’s interests, perspectives, presuppositions, and discursive strategies” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 6, Types of document (sic) and their uses section, para. 5). MINED INFORMA articles and MINED documents helped me understand the official perspective regarding curricular transformation and curricular materials as well as future visions grounded in the present. I also was able to observe and talk with people about how the MINED’s documents were interpreted and used, recognizing that they had a social character and purpose, as well as being social products.

I searched for and found primary documents and data sets to help me answer questions that arose during my two years of field work and two additional years of data analysis and interpretation. I also looked at who wrote documents and for what purposes, what content was included and what was omitted, how they were published, who read them and in what contexts, what readers needed to know in order to use them, and what outcomes proceeded production and use of written documents. For example, the MINED rarely published more than 2,000 copies of documents that should have been available to all schools; teachers programs and PD documents were rarely made available for all teachers. There were no textbooks in high schools for almost a decade, and yet the government printed and widely disseminated 25,000 copies of First Lady Murillo’s “Live Pretty” campaign manual.

In addition to the content of written documents and how or why they were used, I was interested in “social activities that directly involve generating documents” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 6, Types of document (sic) and their uses, para. 20). Most if not all teachers generated written documents in response to MINED directives given in TEPCE workshops; they were socially organized activities within the MINED waterfall with very specific final products. Many generating activities were done in groups and included substantial peer support. The audience was almost always the MINED and government and production involved hand copying from government master plans, using government slogans and phrasings, and peer writings. Most of Nicaragua was still a very oral culture in which people relied heavily on face-to-face interactions, radio and television for information and communication with others. Young people increasingly used texting and FACEBOOK through telephones, though in rural communities I only saw flip phones. Schools were integral to a national effort to build a literate society. The schooling environment was organized around teaching-learning interactions that involved written texts, but it operated in communities that relied almost exclusively on oral traditions and ways of communicating. Literacy activities held great significance in schooling as well as teacher learning in professional development.

Classroom and community artifacts. I complemented my observations and conversations with photos, student work and teacher artifacts. “Objects, traces, skills and talk are mutually implicated, and the ethnography of professional knowledge-production has to take account of them” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 6, Artefacts section, para. 4). In and out of classrooms, I looked at how material artifacts were made and used, by whom, and what value was placed upon them. I tried to understand artifact creation and use in different contexts and for different purposes and audiences.

Photographs are representations through imagery of people, places and events. For me, they served as mnemonic devices during data analysis, and presentation of settings and themes in writing. They provided images of challenges teachers and rural families faced and physical classroom environments. I took my digital camera to each school 1-2 times each. In classrooms, student distractions led me to take photos only during non-instructional times: before classes began, during food break and recess, and after classes were dismissed. In Los Jocotes, I took photos during one student activity and then put the camera in my bag. I took

photos of the communities where I worked, including during my walk from any main road to the school to remember details about school access and resources. I took photos of literacy content and use in rural and urban areas to understand shared beliefs regarding its importance in daily life. I also used photos from MINED INFORMA articles about trainings, competitions and the diplomado, as well as publicly available photos from commemorations, government messages, and official websites.

Teachers each year produced several spiral notebooks of handwritten monthly and daily lesson plans. They produced registers of attendance, grades, parent meetings and report cards for students and parents – all written. The teacher plan was the heart and soul of teaching. Teachers also regularly wrote short reports during and after TEPCE meetings as part of their work and to provide a product for MINED supervision.

Since the actual conduct of the work is invisible to the supervisor, the record is the main focus of administrative control. Likewise, the record constitutes a major means of self-defence for these ‘face-workers’. And, of course, the role of documents, of various kinds, in regimes of ‘transparent accountability has increased substantially in recent decades, with the rise of the ‘audit society’ (Power 1997). (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 6, Documents in context section, para. 12)

They documented governance (i.e., discourse, last-minute nature) and compliance. For example, each year teachers produced one annual plan in line with a specific framework and procedure. In 2013, teachers produced three very different versions of the annual plan, two of which were based on a national MINED plan. Teacher artifacts were important in the analysis of why they did what they did in relation to their beliefs and knowledge in addition to external influences.

I had constant access to students’ written work which was mostly what they copied from the board or from textbooks, homework and notes students wrote in my notebooks. Student notebooks were a principal artifact for student learning as they became handwritten textbooks for students to study. I included work students did after I adapted teacher plans and taught one or more grades on my own. I had second grade students in El Roble and 1st to 3rd graders in Los Jocotes write their own “books” and El Roble first graders write and illustrate a group book. I had third and fourth graders write rhymes in El Roble, and 5th and 6th graders in Los Coquitos write anecdotes. Assignments often helped me understand levels of writing

ability across all grades and schools. I simulated an EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) test on 2nd – 4th grade students in Los Jocotes (timing how many words each student read a grade level text within 60 seconds) at the teacher's request and recorded the results. This allowed me some documented idea regarding reading fluidity for each student in the one-classroom schoolhouse.

Teacher artifacts included daily plans, Q & A guides for upcoming tests and the tests themselves. This helped me compare instructional content and method with the learning assessment. Examples of daily plans helped me understand how teachers used the monthly plan they copied from the malla with existing teacher unigraude guides, how plans often reviewed the same content over one week, and how teachers used the *ejes transversales* or cross-curricular pillars (usually related to the month's values), the evaluation section and homework in their teaching and student learning.

Data analysis

Data analysis began long before I entered a multigrade classroom in Nicaragua and continued until I wrote “the last word” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 93) in this final ethnographic product. I used my experience and knowledge of literature to develop my research focus on relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice. I was interested in contributing to knowledge about how teachers use their beliefs and knowledge flexibly as they maneuver and prioritize external and internal influences in overlapping contexts. My analysis foci and methods went through many iterations and reiterations over the study's six-year life as my understandings changed and I crafted the story in the following chapters.

I used multiple data analysis methods with no well-defined stages, recipes or sequential steps. My understandings began to take shape in the field “in bits and pieces” as I continued “asking questions, listening, probing, comparing and contrasting, synthesizing, and evaluating information” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 111-112). As a dynamic setting, the classroom is characterized by constant change, planned and on-the-spot decision-making, and teacher-student interactions based in the past and present. This unique setting required that I “select and emphasize different features and actions while ignoring and marginalizing others” (Emerson et al, 2011, p. 9), often purposefully.

Ethnographic field work necessarily entails collecting an enormous quantity of data while engaging in multidimensional analyses and interpretations over time (Wolcott, 2008). I

maintained a dual focus: describing what was happening around me while analyzing those happenings. I followed hunches and made connections, self-reflected, examined and re-examined data to generate questions based on evidence collected, identify patterns across time, test relationships and develop categories of ideas, language and actions across teaching-learning contexts, participants and settings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I focused on processes of negotiated meanings and qualities of interactions. I noted when these changed over time, with different people and contexts, and when they remained the same. I coded data with and without data analysis software, mapped, graphed and wrote memos all of which comprised written documentation of my “active processes of interpretation and sense-making” (p. 9) in and out of the field. My meaning making depended on “the choices, positioning, personal sensitivities, and interactional concerns” (p. 9) I and participants had in a constant process of co-constructing meaning.

After several months of documenting and analyzing classroom routines, interactions and environments^{xxvi}, I began to develop and test ideas or hypotheses around what I saw and heard. I would then return to the field to test the hypotheses and answer my questions – a process that usually involved asking new questions in a continuation of a seemingly never-ending cyclical process. My ongoing analysis of field notes helped me decide what to observe, with whom and why; how and when to document an observation; what artifacts and documents were helpful to complement observations; what questions arose from observations that I still had to answer (and how); and what texts to produce. I used ideas to make sense of the data and used data to create new ideas (Fetterman, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). My data analysis process at times resembled a sideways funnel, at times an hourglass. As my understandings increased and my relationships with teachers deepened, I was able to create an evidence-based “frame for constructing conceptual meanings” (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2007) that included descriptions and analyses of major external influences on teachers as well as how teachers used their beliefs and knowledge (shared and individual) in different aspects of their practice and professional lives.

My analysis included both inductive and deductive reasoning (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999) in cycles. While in the field, I wrote up field notes with analytic, reflexive, thematic and theoretical memos in the afternoons and on weekends. These memos captured my analysis through personal, theoretical and

methodological questions, ponderings, musings and how to follow-up on them. Some weeks I took off a few days or the entire week to review notes and write about still-to-answer questions and themes that I needed to continue to investigate from different angles or begin anew. I returned to the field after these analytic breaks to ask questions or focus on a specific aspect of teaching and learning, or a particular influence.

Ongoing data analysis led me to add to my sample of teachers: in 2012 with Los Jocotes and 2013 with the San Jose nucleus of teachers during three kinds of professional development. In 2012 I heard about “the waterfall of learning” and in 2013 observed it in action in teacher PD. In 2012, Liria and I systematically studied questioning in her classroom (at her request). This led me to look at teacher and student use of questioning – and how it was taught – in other classrooms. When a local NCEO did not send someone to proctor the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Los Jocotes, Liria asked that I do something similar, which I did. This created a space to look at reading fluency and comprehension across grades and schools. All teachers asked for help teaching language arts and math content though their requests were private and individual. Ambrosia requested my support on math tools for early elementary grades and creating books from letters and stories (after she saw me teach with these). Pridi and I worked briefly on paragraphs, principal ideas and writing; maps, the four cardinal directions and continents; and reading comprehension. Reina asked me to help Pridi and Emilia with their spelling, handwriting and grading.

They all spoke regularly about classroom management and student behavior. With classroom chaos a common occurrence and student behavior including violence a common teacher complaint, I focused observations on the socio-emotional environment and interactions. I also identified influences on student concentration or attention and misbehaviors. These included a range of teacher-initiated actions like transitions, introduction of content and giving instructions as well as ongoing instructional strategies like daily behavior talks, copying, dictation, drawing, explanations, examples, investigations, modeling, repetition, reproduction, reviews, searching for one response, threats and consequences, and values instruction.

In October 2012, I began to study the Nicaraguan multigrade curriculum and returned to research on multigrade schooling, curriculum development, grade repetition and efforts to improve education quality and student performance in Latin America. Analyzing teaching-

learning opportunities, beliefs, content knowledge, interactions, language and roles in teacher professional development expanded my understandings exponentially during my second year of fieldwork. One constant area of contention had been time in school and time in general: of past heroes in the present and looking towards the future, as well as in the school calendar year, and each school day. At the end of 2012, I used my field notes to calculate instructional time across each classroom of the three core schools and reasons behind wide variance in abiding by the school schedule (I discuss this analysis separately).

I heard and observed the importance of social and socio-professional contexts, and sought out understandings of themes in a variety of contexts cited by teachers and MINED officials. I heard and observed teachers taking roles of resisters, resisting new policies, campaigns or values activity orientations while they also played an equally important role of accommodators. I heard them consistently complain that the MINED did not understand, care or forgot about student learning or placed its own objectives and propaganda with the general citizenry above it. Rather than set up dichotomies (e.g., resistance and accommodation), I sought out examples in which teachers played different roles or enacted their knowledge and beliefs in different ways with different purposes. This helped me understand my focus: how they used their knowledge and beliefs to negotiate external influences and practice their craft.

Based on teacher conversations and observations, I knew I needed to understand the MINED more directly, in addition to teacher perceptions, curricular and MINED document analysis and classroom observations. I needed to observe MINED-teacher interactions closely and over time. My work in 2013 provided that extraordinary opportunity. It also provided me time to deepen my relationships with Pelucita, Murella, Dinora and Gerónima without returning to their classrooms.

Both years of data collection and in-field analysis helped me understand when, how and why teachers created wiggle room around MINED orientations and expectations in relation to local conditions, resources, knowledge and beliefs – and alternate tributaries or actions, including non-action, non-implementation and non-compliance. I observed the waterfall of learning in action. I saw and heard MINED officials along the powerful government waterfall who passed along messages and orientations along with demands for unquestioning compliance and proved incapable of answering teachers' questions or

concerns –often commiserating with teachers and reminding them they, too, were just following orders.

I had graphed each school day by event/task, grades, teacher, time and narrative summary descriptions of who did and said what, when and in what order until mid-June 2012. Through that work, I had carefully documented teachers in all grades and schools allocating more time each week to Spanish Language and Literature and Mathematics classes than other content areas and more than the curriculum designated. In PD, I observed how math and language arts dominated monthly evaluation and planning, MINED concerns and measurements, and the lowest rungs of student performance. I analyzed the curriculum in both content areas while investigating shared beliefs about and common use of math skills and knowledge in families, communities and general society. I documented literacy in rural and urban Nicaragua and asked questions about government values, math and language arts of virtually everyone I met on buses, in town, in the communities as well as teachers and MINED officials.

My units of analysis changed over time. Though I began with routines in elementary classrooms for the first months of the 2012 school year and again in teacher PD in the first months of 2013, I marked changes in content, participants, purpose, messages, interaction rules or sequences in both teaching-learning settings. I focused on specific themes either I or teachers defined, including instructional strategies teachers highlighted as critical to their teaching and student learning, other classroom practices (e.g., “the talk,” transitions), interactions and language or discourse about learning, knowing, knowledge, assessment and how they knew someone was learning or not learning. I listened for talk about decision-making and verbal explanations for why teachers taught as they did. I focused on similar and different meanings and individual or collective interpretations of interactions, language used and classroom events.

Analyzing PD allowed me to simultaneously focus on similarities and differences of teaching-learning processes, content and discourse in PD (teachers as teacher trainers and learners) as compared with what I observed in elementary classrooms (teachers as teachers of young children). Teachers had told me about their multi-tiered instructional planning, how the curricular program was the content they taught and the importance of uniformity across classrooms and schools, and how they needed to follow the MINED master schedule. In PD I

observed how this was modeled, enforced and reinforced. I observed and taught from teachers' lesson plans that teachers hand-copied several times before copying them onto the board in the classroom for students to copy into their notebooks; I saw teachers rely heavily and almost exclusively on copying and dictation in individual seat work or in groups. I then saw this same reliance and same beliefs about learning reflected in PD and the waterfall of learning. I mapped a series of teacher-student interactions, student-student interactions, and teaching-learning patterns in different content areas in elementary and was struck by similarities in professional development.

Towards the beginning of 2013, I had identified 31 categories as phrases, ten as one word, six popular sayings, twelve metaphors, five theoretical areas (e.g., constructivism), 33 teacher practices, 9 kinds of teacher interactions, 13 areas of discourse, 7 teacher questioning strategies, 16 questioning interactions and 16 question types across seven content areas taught. I organized behaviors into expectations, types and management functions and strategies. I delved into certain behaviors like compliance, a constantly recurring theme, to understand its dimensions, properties and different expressions. Some themes included things as broad as participation, planning, and remember/reproduction. In relation to learning and assessing learning, categories included focus on grades, one correct answer, and student learning. Big education categories included education quality, educability, roles, appearances, veneer/ façade/ reality, accountability, responsibility, blame, resist-boycott-surrender-abdicate. I used Spradley's semantic relationships taxonomy^{xxvii} to flesh out relationships among codes and categories, and their presence across contexts, and I graphed some of these.

I began to use *Atlas.ti* software towards the end of 2012. My coding focused on content analysis through open and in-vivo coding initially. I defined attributes such as participant, school and student characteristics, data sources, date, setting, contextual aspects like content, and focus (e.g., language, interaction, meaning). I used magnitude codes that indicated intensity, frequency, direction, presence or evaluative content (Saldaña, 2009, p. 58). These were helpful when I was observing for constructivist and traditional methods and discourse, different kinds of feedback, questioning, transitions, and other instructional practices. I also re-coded for emotions when I became interested in identifying patterns regarding teacher and student emotions in the classroom when I focused in on behavior

management after several teachers requested help with “insolent” and unruly student behaviors. My comparisons of teacher and learner behaviors, interactions and language in PD and elementary classrooms uncovered important parallels and discrepancies, as well as expectations regarding learning and what to do with knowledge and skills learned. These patterns and relationships guided my ongoing analysis and understandings.

I coded field notes from 30 classroom observations using open and in-vivo coding. I re-read coded data to add values and emotions codes. Software allows for overlap in coded segments, changes in quotation boundaries, tracking of all coding decisions, and notes for quotations, codes and documents. Once I finished coding the classroom observations, I had coded 10,480 quotations with 316 codes. I printed these codes as cards and physically scattered them on the floor to manually identify relationships and group them into categories. I wrote about this process to document my decisions, to add information about each code and their relationships with other codes. I then returned to the *Atlas.ti* document (hermeneutic unit or HU) and re-organized codes by the categories I identified. Software allows for this “far-reaching” (Hammerlsey & Atkinson, 2007) ability to re-code all data instantaneously as categories and themes are defined. The first time I did this, I identified the need to re-classify some BEHAV codes taking into account teacher points of view and student points of view. I also re-grouped all behavior codes into the category of BEHAV with broad sub-groups like BEHAV_expectations, BEHAV_MGMT and BEHAV_type. I re-grouped all teacher practices into codes the began with “TP_” followed by categories of characteristics (CHAR_), content (CONT_), instructional time (IT_), interactions (INTERS_), planning (PLAN_) and strategies (STRATS_). I then cross-referenced TP related to planning, for example, with codes that began with PLAN that fell out of the purview of TP. I maintained teacher questioning (TQ) apart from TP with three categories: interactions, strategy and type.

I kept numerous coding and analysis memos in Atlas-ti to document decisions I made as I coded, like when I merged codes. One kind of memo included open documentation of the coding process under headings like “coding work today” and “things to do” that I added to each day for one month at a time. I also kept a running memo called “things to check in code list” for ideas that arose regarding potential code overlap or aspects to define better. A second kind of memo I wrote about questions or decision made by theme, such as “classroom management,” “waterfalls,” “PD” and “environment.” A third kind of memo identified codes

that crossed over themes, contexts and categories, such as “one correct answer” or “behaviorism stronghold.” I wrote a fourth kind of memo to document my re-coding processes. Two other kinds of memos related to theoretical and methodological questions as they arose.

I also analyzed documents without *Atlas.ti* while translating them and taking notes during that word-by-word analysis. Translation is an incredibly useful analytical tool because of the attention one has to put to each word, to multiple listenings and readings, and to conversations based on that careful study. I did this with over a dozen government documents on planning and evaluation, curricular design, three school year calendars (2012, 2013 and 2014), the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, the National Human Development Plan, the Multigrade Curricular Malla, three sets of 2009 Multigrade Programs (1st/2nd grades, 3rd/4th grades and 5th/6th grades for all content areas), and Murillo’s Live Pretty Campaign documents. I read and took notes on four “interactive modules” from previous governments that Ortega’s MINED had re-printed, four “Significant Expressions” PD documents (a training series), and six of the 24 diplomado documents.

I spent between ten and eighteen hours transcribing each teacher and parent interview. During transcriptions, I jotted notes about the content and relationships with different themes. Once I finished each transcription, I returned to the notes and the transcriptions to flesh out my ideas. I returned to these codes and notes in my analysis once I had exited the field.

Data analysis and interpretation, post-field. I left Nicaragua in December 2013 to my home in El Salvador, where I began my out-of-field analysis, interpretation and writing, an iterative process over the following three years. My analyses shifted once I exited the field. I focused on triangulation within and across participants, methods and sources; searched for convergence and divergence in findings; listened for multiple perspectives; and began to identify themes for the final product. As I began to write, I developed a frame for the overall story with related data while constantly questioning how and if I might be implicitly focusing on a certain voice, story or perspective while marginalizing others (Emerson et al., 2011).

Even with my year of observing PD and MINED officials at work with teachers, along with the many conversations with teachers about the MINED, I still felt I needed to

understand institutional “voices” and beliefs from the MINED more. I searched for, found and analyzed primary documents (e.g., PD and MINED INFORMA articles) that could provide this voice and official justifications, language and reasonings. I investigated the different pressures teachers identified as coming from the GRUN, President Ortega and First Lady Murillo. I had learned about the government’s national articulation of its human development project and Plan, but needed to know more. I had witnessed constantly changing policies, proceduralization of teaching and learning, and official expectations for full compliance of ongoing orientations and reporting, but did not fully understand why officials felt these constant factors in teachers’ lives were so necessary. I sought to understand MINED and Sandinista points of view regarding what many teachers characterized as politicization of education and a widely shared belief that restoring the right to a free, public education was critical to societal transformation – with being key protagonists. After hearing about and observing “the waterfall of learning” in practice, I saw also how it paralleled with Ortega’s governing style and his carefully constructed structural waterfalls of Sandinista Party-Government of National Reconciliation and Unity organization. This structure permitted powerful waterfalls of almost instant communication, national-to-local implementation and direct supervision of GRUN policies, campaigns and ongoing orientations.

My desire to understand what the government was trying to do and its methods stemmed from my ultimate desire to understand its explicit use of teachers as public servants whose roles under Ortega included being local government spokespeople and activists. I collected government tools, propaganda and written discourse, information about events and characterizations of leaders and actions. I learned all I could from multiple perspectives about the National Human Development Plan, the Strategic Education Plan 2011-2015, national commemorations of Sandinista heroes and historic memory, ALBA and ALBANIC – from the time they were announced to the present. These documents and events expressed and epitomized Sandinista beliefs and values which were translated into values education and included in what many teachers perceived as important curricular transformations, blatant politicization of education and their jobs, or something to address anti-values in a global world. I sought to understand voices that condemned the “unconstitutional President Daniel Ortega” (common phrase in the national newspaper, *La Prensa*), denounced Ortega’s policy

of ruptures (Vijil, 2010), and embraced everything related to “Danielismo” or “Orteguismo” – Daniel Ortega and his transformed Sandinista Party. These bigger, macro issues and understandings informed and were informed by beliefs about teaching and learning, pedagogic tools, instructional planning and assessment, and values enactment.

I still wanted to deepen my understanding of MINED points of view, so I decided to analyze one year of “MINED INFORMA”¹⁶ articles. In March 2014, I downloaded 1,804 article titles that the MINED had posted on its website between December 2012 and December 2013. I first analyzed the title list and identified 67 themes which I grouped into 10 categories. I read a random sample of 451 articles (25% of that year’s publications) before selecting 58 related to knowledge, professional development, learning, values, education quality and government announcements about schooling (e.g., enrollment, beginning the school year). I coded this sample of 58 articles in a second Atlas-ti document or HU. From the MINED INFORMA articles, I coded 1042 quotations with 131 codes. I re-read all TEPCE and diplomado session notes, and translated field notes from two TEPCEs and one diplomado workshop, taking notes as I translated and returning to those notes at the end.

My understandings from these analyses helped me to identify four themes that participants and the MINED agreed were transformational, primordial in teaching and learning, and key to academic schooling: values education, planning and plans, math and language arts. They also comprised the majority of the teachers’ work, thoughts and interactions. Guided by these four areas, I returned to my analyses and the data to map out each theme with flowcharts, organizational charts, matrices and graphs that demonstrated relationships within and among them, and nuances in relationships among often changing external influences and internal teacher cognitions as teachers grappled with how to implement aspects of each theme in their practice. Teacher, MINED, family and broader societal understandings of the four themes – and how they interrelated with practice – was vital to understand how teachers used their own beliefs and knowledge in their practice – and why. I also analyzed how these relationships changed and remained steady across contexts, and where implementation and discourse varied within each teacher and as a group.

I analyzed and reanalyzed each of the four themes separately and together – in in relation to the macro context of Ortega’s governance and the MINED, and the more micro

¹⁶ MINED INFORMS

context of the classroom, school and school community. For example, I returned to my analyses of values and expanded upon what I had already done. I reviewed and added to historic memory commemorations, government slogans, and values in school calendars, official discourse, and values education in elementary classrooms, PD, families, communities, government offices and public spaces. I returned to re-read interview transcriptions looking for themes related to values. I had collected enough data and grappled with the macro context enough to produce a parallel micro-study of the government and governance, in general and through one government agency, the Citizen Power Ministry of Education.

As I grappled with different teacher and MINED perceptions, I decided to deepen my understanding of non-governmental points of view as well. In September 2014, I created a third Atlas-ti document to code eighteen non-governmental documents on education, including ten from the Jesuit Central American University monthly publication *Envio*, and the rest from a variety of national and international NGOs working in Nicaragua in education. In this Atlas-ti document, I coded 1,146 quotations with a total of 180 codes. In February 2015, I merged the three separate documents into one Atlas-ti document. I exported codes into an excel file and reviewed them for overlapping codes, categories and overarching themes. After reviewing recurring codes and themes, I made decisions to join related codes under one code, or group codes under a theme. From this merge I had 362 codes grouped into 49 categories across all data sources. I continued to read written media articles from the two main newspapers that had online editions – *El Nuevo Diario* and *La Prensa*. In 2016 while continuing to write the final product, I began watching *NotiVos*, a Nicaraguan television news program.

I began to write what I called “drafty drafts” of each chapter. “It is now widely recognized that ‘the ethnography’ is produced as much by how we write as by the processes of data collection and analysis” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 9, Writing ethnography The (sic) disciplines of reading and writing introduction, para. 1). Writing a final product is an iterative process with no prescribed format. I experimented with thematic chapters, chronological descriptions, “A Day in the Life” highlighting one teacher, and even composite characters. Each of these furthered my analysis as I wrote. They contributed to my

growing practical knowledge and understanding of what teachers did and why, and how they used their knowledge and beliefs.

The reflexivity I had developed to constantly monitor and evaluate effects of my presence during the study and my own beliefs and knowledge during analysis continued during my writing. I was extra-conscious of my attempts to transform what I had experienced and understood about the teacher participant's socio-professional work into a scholarly text (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) while remaining close to the data, the teachers and the complexity and dynamism of all that influenced them. I was aware of my process of having to "conceptualize the relevance of local happenings so that they relate to analytic issues" while simultaneously remaining sensitive to how these re-framings might distort the meaning of member categories" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 206).

My initial chapters were over 200 pages long because I included descriptions, contradictions and nuances within each theme, taking care not to force data into a seemingly logical but misrepresentative tightness or uniformity. I returned to the data to find as many examples as I could about certain sub-themes and included between three and ten in the first drafts. Through later rounds of editing, I chose the excerpts and quotations that seemed the most representative of what I felt was most important to tell to allow the scenes to speak for themselves" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 213). This was not a simple process, and one that required analytical decisions such as which were most relevant to use, where to begin and end and excerpt, what kind of framing and post-analysis each excerpt needed. I decided to break down some longer excerpts or vignettes with analytic commentary in between.

I knew I had to present teacher experiences, beliefs and knowledge as they related with "external" or overlapping beliefs and knowledge imposed by government policies, mandates and PD through officials and official socio-professional spaces. This is why I dedicate two chapters (4 and 5) to important socio-cognitive and socio-cultural aspects of the macro context that seeped into teachers daily lives and work. The frequency with which teachers and families spoke of MINED and Ortega governance in their lives (and parroted government slogans and values) led me to investigate and understand beliefs the government embedded in the National Human Development Plan, the Sandinista historic memory, and its values education curriculum and actions – from the government's perspective. Understanding Ortega's Plan and push towards societal transformation was critical to understanding MINED

officials' words, actions, interactions with and expectations of teachers. The Shared Responsibility Model (chapter 5) was central to the Ortega-led transformation of an entire society – with teachers at the forefront of change. Murillo's 2013 "Live Cleanly, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well" Campaign, implemented across all government agencies in all Nicaraguan communities, became a prime example of how the government influenced teacher practice and how teachers made decisions in their practice by using a constantly changing mix of their own beliefs and knowledge with those the government imposed upon them (e.g., via the campaign, values curriculum, etc). After presenting how the government and its beliefs influenced and shaped teachers' socio-professional environments (chapters 4, 5 and 6), I turn to how this played out in schools using a more in-depth analysis in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of the Shared Responsibility Model and its metamorphosis into the "Live Pretty" Campaign.^{xxviii} I made this interpretative decision to show how teacher decisions and instructional practice of values content was enmeshed with MINED beliefs, knowledge and practice.

For each of the four major teaching areas I analyzed (values, planning, math and language arts), I re-read interview transcripts, MINED documents, memos, field notes, code lists and coded quotations to highlight aspects related to beliefs, knowledge and practice, as well as discourse, interactions, and language used. I reviewed mini-studies I had done in 2012-2014 and added to them. I reflected on the overlapping contexts and reviewed data related to questions that emerged during these analyses and interpretations. My constant overarching question of "Where's the evidence?" became eclipsed by "Is this the best way to tell this story?" I began to present initial findings to university classes on my data analysis and management, findings regarding planning and academics, and the study's methodology.

Interpretation "refers to developing ideas about your findings and relating them to the literature and to broader concerns and concepts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 159). I returned to literature on teacher beliefs and knowledge, multigrade classrooms, and learning theories. My interpretations occurred alongside data analysis as I narrowed the study's focus in the field, in the analytic questions I pondered as I broke down or found pieces of the puzzle that comprised the overall picture I was trying to understand, and in ongoing discussions with participants. Interpretation with analysis allowed me to create categories of categories which led to overarching themes. It helped me form a story about the interaction of teachers'

knowledge, beliefs and practice in relation to their understanding of their teaching, learning and assessment in relation to the four overarching areas of values, planning and plans, math and language arts. Interpretation and analysis over months and years of working the data and being immersed with the teachers in their daily professional lives, “the subtopics, mini-experiments, layers of triangulated effort, key events, and patterns of behavior [began to] form a coherent and often cogent picture of what [wa]s happening” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 110) and why. This unique process contributed to what Fetterman terms “crystallization” of the story – what became the chapters that follow.

Data analysis in cultural contexts and questions of validity. Maxwell (2004) defined validity as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (p.106). Validity was my goal that I could reach by seeking evidence to support findings through patterns and themes or alternative explanations – all firmly rooted in data from the field. I explicitly faced two common threats to validity (Maxwell, 2004): researcher bias and researcher reactivity. In the former, the researcher fits data to an existing theory and/or beliefs, while in the latter the researcher influences the setting and participants in a way that skews the findings. I responded to these two threats with the following data collection and analysis methods:

- a) Intensive, long-term involvement with three schools, ten core teachers (47 others), two local MINED leaders and dozens of families (and over 100 students);
- b) Data from observations, informal conversations, interviews, documents and artifacts to include different points of view (Emerson et al., 1995; Maxwell, 2004);
- c) Participant validation of analysis through member-checking;
- d) Searching for discrepant evidence/negative cases;
- e) Triangulation using multiple sources and the same sources over extended time;
- f) Quasi statistical analysis of frequencies and other descriptives in codes and mini-studies of curriculum, MINED INFORMA and the MINED master schedule; and
- g) Comparison of three schools, six teachers, two school leaders, eight family members.

Triangulation involves testing one source of information against another, over time, and what one source says or does in different contexts, what Fetterman (2010) termed “self-contained triangulation” (p. 96) to “strip away alternative explanations and attempt to prove a

hypothesis” (p. 94). I actively used multiple methods to answer the same questions or attack them from different angles, what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) termed data method triangulation. I sought out and compared different sources and levels of data to confirm hypotheses and identify dimensions and properties of situations, interactions and themes. I approached “data with multiple perspectives and hypotheses in mind” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Chapter 8, Generating concepts section, para. 14), using multiple theoretical frameworks in different moments. This triangulation helped me to grasp “fundamental ideas and values” (p. 97) in schooling and among a variety of stakeholders in education and the participating rural multigrade schools. This process helped me crystalize conceptions and elements of the story I was going to tell.

The process of analysis through triangulation is never complete. New themes and ideas remain loosely or simply unarticulated as I decide in which areas to focus for this specific product. “This is both the virtue and the quandary of ethnography” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009, Appendix: Researching Identification at an Elite Boarding School, Relationships in the Field section, para. 3). My construction and reconstruction of my time working with the participating teachers, students and families is provisional and partial; it is nowhere near complete. Teachers’ flexible use of their knowledge, beliefs and practices in different contexts is far more complex and fascinating a process than I am able to communicate here. My analysis and writing simply cannot capture the totality of life at that time as a public servant in the Ortega administration.

Validity threats when doing cross cultural research in education are multifold. I have very different teaching experiences in the U.S. and El Salvador than the Nicaraguan teachers I worked with on this study. We often held divergent philosophies and beliefs about teaching, learning and teaching-learning processes. As a cultural outsider I took some time to develop communicative competencies, customs and similar ways of thinking and knowing with the teachers, students and community members. My position as a cultural learner provided me space to ask questions about things people took for granted or never thought to ask about. While creating potential threats to my understanding of teachers’ perceptions, beliefs and justifications for their actions, these differences provided openings for joint discussions and investigations into differing points of view or actions. Living and working with teachers for

two years provided ample time to become a more able and fluent cross-cultural researcher and participant.

Adding to these cultural factors was a generalized rejection in Nicaragua of U.S. imperialism and distrust of “gringos” or people from the U.S. In one of the houses where we lived on the outskirts of the city, when my husband, son and I would walk by one of the land take-overs (a large community of over 500 families) people would say, “There go the gringos” or “Hey! Gringos!” We became a landmark: “Just past where the gringos live.” I was “La Gringuita” to teachers and students in the first months (and most family), until they learned my name and when I was not present.

This generalized mistrust – and not wanting to get into trouble with superiors – led to a tendency towards secrecy with leaders at each level of governance (community, municipal, state and national) deciding what to make public or to share with people who were not organic members of their community or professional area of work. I tackled these threats in the same ways mentioned above. Arguably one of the most important actions I took was to rejoin the schools and communities – and the PD sessions – in 2013. Almost everyone I knew had predicted I would never return “because no one ever does” (from various participants). I was still “la gringuita” but I had earned many people’s trust: I had not informed on anyone to MINED officials at any level and I showed no interest in doing so. Teachers and local MINED officials were more talkative the second year, and much more blunt and open with their feelings and ideas. The teachers with whom I had developed relationships in 2012 continued their openness which contributed to others accepting me into their very private PD space.

I addressed these risks to validity in four main ways: intensive human involvement, collecting data within and among multiple sources over time, engaging in an analysis of constant comparison while searching for negative or discrepant cases, and conscious personal and professional reflexivity. I was able to compare what the same person said and did over time in different contexts as well as group participants by theme, context or source of information (e.g., by school, grade, content area, interactions, teacher practice, etc.). I also looked at how discourse and actions changed or remained the same over time, and why. This process was possible by my ongoing efforts to collect and analyze data from multiple sources of information: participant-observations in classrooms and PD; informal conversations and

interviews among all participants; primary documents from the MINED and education NGOs; media reports; photos in relation to literacy and governance (among other themes); and classroom artifacts.

A fifth approach to ensuring validity was through mini-studies I conducted during and after my time in the field. When teachers requested support in areas, we often did mini-studies together. The most structured of these were with Profe Liria regarding questioning and reading comprehension, but I also worked closely with Pridi, Ambrosia, Liria and Regalia on planning, math and language arts. Regalia and Liria provided me their planning notebooks, and I studied these with MINED documents on planning, several PD sessions on planning and TEPCE sessions I observed. When I identified instructional time as an issue, and the MINED sent out a directive ordering teachers to not dismiss students early during the rainy season, my mini-study at the end of SY2012 contributed to what I had studied – and would continue to study – about planning. When teachers, MINED officials and family members confirmed that math and language arts were the two most important academic subjects elementary students could learn, I commenced a long-term curricular study of the two subjects. I began with the malla and 2009 multigrade program, and then incorporated textbooks and *fascículos* and teacher plans. Themes from this mini-study informed ongoing conversations, classroom observations and interviews.

Another common threat to validity was my presence. My visiting classrooms at first created unintended responses or “reactivity” in the elementary classrooms and PD because I was so noticeable, not part of the daily routine and many people wondered about an unspoken motive or ultimate purpose. The biggest fear was if I was somehow related to the MINED or, in Los Coquitos, a sister relationship with a European town. I addressed this threat by normalizing my presence. I spent many days in classrooms and actively participated in their teaching and learning. I waited to do interviews until we had well-formed relationships and had already held dozens of informal conversations over almost two years; I also positioned myself as the eternal learner, wanting a more structured time to sit and ask questions about things I still did not understand. I had talked with teachers and family about all interview themes during informal conversations. Everyone was confident that their interviews would remain confidential. I was a tight-lipped, note-taking Gringa.

Since I did this study on my own, I reviewed findings with many Nicaraguans while in the field through my constant questioning and informal conversations, in schools and people's homes. In September 2014, almost nine months after leaving the field and analyzing data exclusively in El Salvador, I returned to the San Jose region for one month. I visited teachers, students and family members in homes and helped out in classrooms one more time. I made opportunities to ask questions I had pending, either over a cup of coffee or a meal, or during recess or a walk home. I took notes about these interactions but did not record them.

An ongoing ethical concern for me was how I could ensure everyone understood the study – its purpose, methods, questions and possible outcomes – and that people felt free to tell me if they wanted to stop participation or wanted me not to include some particular event. The government and universities did very little research.^{xxix} Teachers, parents and community leaders focused on the pedagogical support I provided and linked my work to the NGO that had introduced me. I was concerned that some signed consents and helped organize consents of family members and students to gain classroom support and ensure my regular visits. I asked teachers every few months if they were still in agreement that I could use the notes they constantly saw me taking in their classrooms. I asked them to sign different consents for classroom observations and interviews separately. I could not teach people about research, but I reminded them constantly of what my study entailed and my foci. No one requested to leave the study or to not include an event or conversation. On the contrary, several teachers told me they were pleased that I was documenting student behaviors and daily challenges they faced.

Data organization and management (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). My data organization and management began with my dissertation proposal, IRB, Nicaragua correspondence and preliminary notes for the early phases of research for which I maintained an electronic filing system as well as a paper one. While living in Nicaragua and later in El Salvador I relied on electronic organization because I printed very little. My 2012 electronic filing system included field notes, documents, artifacts and transcripts by month with file names that identified the kind of data, the school, the teacher, and the actual date. I created separate folders and files for reflections, memos, artifacts, documents, themes and mini-studies. I could easily search for these electronic files and retrieve them when necessary. I

kept a physical calendar with all my activities to track my classroom visits and meetings. I carried a field notebook with me everywhere and each one filled up every few months depending on its size, the size of my writing and the number of activities I observed or participated in during which I was able to take notes. When I could not take copious notes during an observation I would write up my jottings on the computer using the same filing system.

In Nicaragua, I stored data in notebooks, my personal computer, a large hard drive back up and jump drives. Everything was kept under lock and key with consent forms and classroom artifacts. At the end of 2012, I brought the year's physical papers and back-ups to the U.S. At the end of 2013, I took them to El Salvador. I began folders with coding notes, theoretical and other themes, and future study ideas. As I began to write, I reorganized my electronic system by chapter, copying files and folders of applicable field notes, memos, documents, artifacts, new articles and written drafts into each chapter folder.

Limitations

It is important to note the methodological limitations of this study. As previously discussed, an important limitation in ethnographic research is its reliance on the integrity and skills of the researcher. Though I had almost ten years of research experience in classrooms and laboratory settings in the U.S. and El Salvador at the beginning of this study, this was my first ethnographic endeavor. While the data collection and analysis processes were rigorous (see validity section), I felt the limitation of one researcher most keenly – and missed having a team of people, both researchers and practitioners, with whom I could consult regularly while writing the final product. I felt this most keenly as I made decisions about organization of findings, balancing analysis with local meanings, synthesizing coherently without marginalizing voices and perspectives, selecting excerpts, and revising analytic commentaries about implications, nuances and the importance of actions, interactions, relationships and language (Emerson et al., 2011). There are no guidelines for constructing a final report in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). This final ethnographic product by its very nature focuses on one piece of multigrade elementary classrooms in Nicaragua from field work in 2012 and 2013; as such, it will always be incomplete (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010).

Another important limitation related to this study's ethnographic nature was its reliance on thick description with in-depth analysis. Ethnographies can focus almost exclusively on description or tend more towards analysis; some, like this study, fall in between the two. I combined description with analysis due to the study's exploratory nature and the paucity of research in rural multigrade elementary classrooms. Nicaragua's unique socio-political situation and the government's positioning of education and teachers in its national project required two chapters for background, an additional chapter for physical settings, and three findings chapters to analyze inter-relationships of beliefs, knowledge and practice at the teacher level as well as among national and MINED leaders with teachers, the values curriculum and widely shared societal beliefs. These decisions contributed to the study's length and detail, a feature that made it inaccessible to those who consider it "too lengthy, too detailed or too involved" (Stake, 2005, p. 460).

A third common limitation for ethnographic studies is their focus on context-dependent knowledge. Though it is not generalizable to a broader population in the same way quantitative studies purport to be, it provides enough detail and portraiture to help the reader transfer the knowledge gained to similar situations. "It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to his or her context" (Stake, 2005, p. 455). An enormous percentage of the world's population learns in multigrade elementary school classrooms and many face similar challenges as the educators and officials who participated in this study. This study seeks to add to the extremely small research base that has studied what teachers and students do in multigrade elementary classrooms and why (Little, 2006). The study demonstrated the context-dependent nature of the dynamic and complex process teachers negotiate as they draw upon different beliefs and knowledge to understand external influences and decide how to implement their daily practice. The fact that this process constantly changes and is context-dependent demonstrates why it is futile to summarize or simplify it, but in no way undermines how people can use the methods and findings in other similar education settings. Though specific to participating teachers and school stakeholders, the study's methods and findings may be applicable to multigrade schools throughout Nicaragua, Central America and other parts of the world.

This study did not focus on predicting relationships between teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice with student learning, or with future behavior. Gaps in the

knowledge base on rural multigrade schools informed my decision to use exploratory methods over explanatory ones. In this way, I seek to contribute to what I hope will be a growing field of research on multigrade education and existing research on relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explained my ethnographic approach and decisions I made while collecting, analyzing and interpreting data over the last six years. The four methods explained in this chapter and the data analysis processes led to this telling of how teachers understood and implemented values education, plans and planning, math and language arts. I attempt to disentangle how teachers prioritized and used different beliefs and knowledge in different settings as they managed and negotiated different influences and pressures.

To understand variation in these relationships, I next describe and analyze aspects of macro contexts in which teachers worked. Chapters 3 and 4 comprise a mini-study of the Ortega government and governance from primary government documents, media accounts, conversations with Nicaraguans in and out of education as well as interviews and informal conversations with teachers and family. Contradictions, ambiguities, and discontinuities characterized the Nicaraguan education system. Teachers mediated institutional beliefs and knowledge with their own to improvise order in Ortega's contrarianist setting.

This macro context provides a framework to understand teacher perceptions of the government and its role in their lives. National MINED expectations, policies, proceduralized orientations, and supervisión came in daily doses, with Municipal MINED officials providing the bridge between national leaders (the macro) and each teacher's school and classroom. The omnipresence of government messages and MINED officials at local levels included a barrage of Sandinista beliefs and programs in each school and classroom. The following two chapters describe this concrete and sustained aspect of teachers' lives, and how the government was a constant influence in teachers' beliefs, knowledge and practice.

PART TWO

In this section, I dedicated three chapters to describe and analyze overlapping macro contexts and physical environments that affected and influenced participating teachers' beliefs and knowledge systems, and their practice, on a daily basis. The facets of these contexts that I examine were based on what teachers, local MINED leaders, government officials and opposition figures identified as the more predominant and influential. I observed and heard about the highlighted aspects of governance in this section almost daily. My analysis is by no means exhaustive and does not intend to be. My focus is on how these influential and overlapping contextual factors, people, ideas and interactions interacted with teacher beliefs and knowledge systems as they participated in PD and made daily classroom decisions about their practice.

In chapter four I explore the broadest context teachers and officials cited (and I observed): Ortega's Government of National Reconciliation and Unity (GRUN). Since this study focused on values education, I looked at how and why the government placed values (and which ones) as the engine behind its entire national project and local implementation of its mandates. Teachers constantly cited how the government imposed beliefs on them through policies, mandates, values curriculum and supervision. The government agreed and celebrated the efficiency of its waterfall of learning – which I explain and analyze. The GRUN defined all government actions and programs within the framework of its National Human Development Plan whose foundation was the “Christian Values, Socialist Ideals and Solidarity Practices Model” (see Figure 2 below). Nicaragua's transformation under this values model and national plan relied on “recuperation of values,” “restoration of rights,” and “strengthening of capacities” (see Figure 2). Ortega regularly touted his national project as a continuation of the original Sandinista Revolution of the 1980s, and he resurrected an Orteguista versión of the Sandinista's historic memory – which I highlight in chapter four. He used Nicaraguans' shared past by commemorating historical events and figures to inspire loyal followers and all citizens to join his efforts. I describe two: General Augusto Sandino, the revolution's namesake, and The Great National Literacy Crusade of 1980 during which the waterfall of learning was born.

Ortega and Murillo framed most government actions as restoration of rights they gained under the Sandinistas in the 1980s and lost under U.S.-Nicaraguan neo-liberal

policies before Ortega regained power. They invited the population in general and all public servants in particular to continue the struggle of past heroes who fought for a better Nicaragua, and whose struggles had made the new opportunities under Ortega possible. Sandinista values from the past lived on in the present and were vital for raising consciousness and incorporating more people into Ortega's national project. Teachers and local MINED leaders cited (and I observed) six governance styles that deeply affected teacher understandings and practice: the waterfall of learning, historic memory, caudillismo, contrarianism, loyalty, and what I termed homogenous nearsightedness (the GRUN one-size-fits-all approach to design and implementation of its programs despite enormous diversity across Nicaragua). My exploration of these themes of governance and values comprises chapter four.



Figure 2: Graphic depiction of Ortega's National Human Development Plan, 2012-2016, that guided "The Transformation of Nicaragua" through its "Christian Values, Socialist Ideals and Solidarity Practices Model." *Ministerio del Poder Ciudadano para la Familia, Adolescencia y Niñez, Avances en la implementación del Modelo de Atención Integral, Familiar y Comunitario* (2013).

In chapter five, I describe several socio-professional settings. I explore psycho-social aspects and interactions that I observed and that teachers, local MINED leaders and government officials cited as most important. Several were government created in which *sensibilización*, or consciousness raising and education, about the national plan, government programs, and teachers' new role were primordial. What local leaders did and said (as per national leaders' orientations) during government-controlled professional development contributed to my understandings of government beliefs about teaching and learning. A regular PD setting was the Education Evaluation, Planning and Training workshops (TEPCE) held the last Friday of each month for 10 months of the school year. For these and all PD sessions, national leaders designed and communicated to state and municipal MINED leaders in TEPEs (Education Evaluation and Planning workshops), several days before municipal and local leaders implemented the design with all 55,000 teachers in TEPCEs at nucleus schools (groupings of neighbor schools with one nucleus school leading the rest). This was one example of the waterfall in action. The government's unprecedented 24-session diplomado with three extra values sessions and one week of "Live Pretty" campaign trainings – in addition to the ten monthly TEPCEs – provided an opportunity to understand government beliefs about teaching and learning, and values, in a way I could not in 2012 with just teacher perspectives on their PD and related practices in classrooms. I briefly describe informal networks teachers created alongside the government's more formal settings. I expand on those informal networks in a separate document.

Teachers complained regularly about how government officials and families blamed them for the crisis in education – a crisis they held the government and families responsible for more than themselves. These differing understandings and critiques guided me to investigate the crisis from perspectives teachers, families, local leaders, national education organizations, and opposition figures raised. This allowed me to then analyze education policies designed to tackle the crisis, such as automatic promotion for all grades, and student remediation for all. I included in this analysis how teachers understood these two policies and why their practices in these two areas varied considerably. Though I used teachers conversations and my observations to guide this chapter, I quote written documents more than individual teacher quotes for reasons mentioned previously.

I conclude with brief descriptions in chapter six of physical environments that were key to this study and understanding influences on teachers' psycho-social interactions and decision-making. Due to concerns about confidentiality and protecting participating teachers, I keep these descriptions brief and do not include images. I describe the physical school nucleus where up to 57 member teachers met almost weekly in 2013 for a total of 43 PD sessions in 10 months. I also describe the three core multigrade schools with their seven classrooms in chapter 6.

Though the focus of the three chapters in part two stems from my classroom observations and conversations with teachers and local MINED leaders, my presentation of these broad contexts and official beliefs systems and knowledge relies heavily on documentary evidence over teacher perspectives attributed to individual teachers (i.e., direct quotes). This is due in part to my quest to understand and explain government perspectives from their discourse and written documents – outside of the teacher filters that originally guided this effort. In part three, I anchor government perspectives and actions described in this section to how teachers perceived and acted in relation to these broader contexts imposed upon them. Teacher perspectives and PD observations guided where I broadened my data collection to understand overlapping macro contexts. By focusing in macro contextual areas that were important influences on teachers without direct teacher quotes, I removed personally identifiable perspectives from individual teacher participants. This technique protected individual teachers by making it unnecessary to publicly attribute quotes to one person. Government documents and discourse from officials and public opposition figures was sufficient to represent a broad spectrum of teacher views while also understanding government policy, procedures, programs and campaigns from a Sandinista government perspective. In Nicaraguan teachers' top-down and punitive socio-professional environment, many teachers shared critiques of the MINED, Ortega and Murillo freely in private spaces, but not publicly because the latter was dangerous and unnecessary. An exception to this was for teachers, like Profe Fausto, who were local leaders and widely recognized as devout Sandinistas, loyal Ortega followers. Profe Fausto retired from teaching by the time this study was published, and he freely offered constructive critiques of Ortega's government and the MINED while reinforcing his support for the Party's efforts towards societal transformation.

Chapter Four

Nicaragua, Nicaragüita, the Most Beautiful of my Loves¹⁷

On September 1, 2014, I headed to Nicaragua for one month to check in with participating teachers and families in each community where I worked and lived the previous two years. It was the first day of "Homeland Month" during which Central Americans celebrated their independence from Spain (September 15). As I crossed from Honduras into Nicaragua, the over-sized red and black Sandinista flag greeted me, covering almost half the roof of the main immigration building. There was no blue and white Nicaraguan flag anywhere, a reminder of the over-sized presence of the Sandinista Party in government. When I stepped inside the small building, the walls were plastered with colorful flyers of the country's President, Daniel Ortega, and his First Lady, Rosario Murillo. In each flyer, a photo of the couple smiling and waving at the camera was surrounded by big letters calling on people to vote or reminding everyone they were "Making Homeland," the 2014 annual slogan. Each flyer included three other government slogans: "Christian, Socialist and Solidarity!" "The People, President!" and "Citizen Power!"¹⁸

The immigration officers asked for my papers, showing no interest in my small bag. I had left the country the previous December with a couple of suitcases and my books packed in two boxes. Immigration officials had immediately honed in on the boxes, opening them "to make sure the little gringa doesn't take el Comandante's books."¹⁹ One official stood up with my 2012 calendar book in hand. He opened it. "Are they all like this?" Before I could answer, another immigration official pushed through the travelers and asked what I was taking out of country. "There aren't any of the President's books, right?"²⁰ I had no idea what those books might be, but they determined I did not have any. They then handed my husband a small, blank square of white paper and told him to give it to the official at the pluma upon leaving for the Honduran side. "Do I need a piece of paper, too?" I asked. The official looked at me, then at my husband, then at his colleague, a grin widening across his face. "Yanqui imperialists don't need permission," he joked, pointing at my U.S. passport. "They come and go as they please." U.S. imperialism was a common theme among Nicaraguans, including teachers and parents. Homeland month included a commemoration of a battle against William Walker, a U.S. slave owner who declared himself president of Nicaragua during one of numerous invasions and U.S. Marine occupations. The country's main national hero, Augusto Sandino, had successfully fought off U.S. Marines until they left the country in 1933. Sandino's

¹⁷ Nicaragua, my dear little Nicaragua: a song dedicated to Nicaragua by a Sandinista singer/songwriter

¹⁸ Slogans: "Haciendo Patria," "Cristiano, Socialista y Solidario," "El Pueblo, Presidente!" and "Poder Ciudadano"

¹⁹ Para asegurar que la gringuita no lleva libros del Comandante

²⁰ ¿No hay libros del Presidente, verdad?

silhouette graced the outer door as I left to head for the bus, his small figure with a wide-brimmed hat a symbol of Nicaraguan tenacity and patriotism.

I caught the first of three buses towards my destination and immediately noticed a change in the landscape. Big rocks that had blended into the hills on previous trips were now brightly painted white with red and black letters that bore the message: “35/19: DANIEL = GOOD GOVERNMENT”²¹. The first two numbers written as the fraction 35/19 represented the 35th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution’s overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship on July 19. It was shorthand to remind people of this history. “Daniel” referred to President Daniel Ortega, known most popularly among adults and children alike as either Daniel or El Comandante. He had fought during the revolution, had been its first president, and, according to the slogan on thousands of rocks, continued being “good government” today. Daniel had become a larger-than-life presence in Nicaraguan politics for over fifty years. Now, “Daniel” was the Sandinista government.

Daniel and his Good Government reached into people’s lives on a daily basis – including the personal and professional lives of all teachers. Ortega relied heavily on teachers as paid public servants to put his vision of a new society into practice in their work in every school community. In this chapter I explain six principal qualities and methods of Nicaraguan governance that government officials and teachers cited as directly related to teachers, teaching and student learning. Teachers spoke about how these qualities and methods greatly influenced their daily work and decision-making. I observed them in practice in PD, and I drew on dozens of government documents, hundreds of MINED articles and official discourse at commemorations and other events to understand them from a government and Orteguista perspective.

The first and arguably most critical kind of interaction between government officials and teachers was Ortega’s use of a parallel pyramid of national, state, municipal and local offices that reached across the country with loyal staff that communicated and supervised Ortega and Murillo’s orientations.²² Ortega used this waterfall of governance to communicate directly with local leaders and public servants, including teachers. The umbrella of “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” values – with a laundry list of related values – were a second quality of Ortega’s government and form of governance. Government officials along

²¹ DANIEL=BUEN GOBIERNO

²² Orientaciones served as orders but the word offered the appearance of their content not being obligatory.

the waterfall communicated orientations regarding values education and activities to teachers and all citizens. These values gave meaning to his national project, and he often conveyed them through historic narratives of Sandinista heroes and events. Below, I explain how Ortega used two principal stories: that of General Sandino's life (the revolution's namesake) and the internationally acclaimed National Literacy Crusade of 1980. I then briefly describe four more qualities in government: 1) *Caudillismo*, a Latin American blend of personality politics with strong-man overtones; 2) Contrarianism, a common way Nicaraguan governments justified their projects and compared them to the failures of their predecessors; 3) Loyalty, measured in multiple ways including full compliance and what Ortega required of all public servants; and 4) Homogenous nearsightedness, a set of widely shared beliefs that Nicaragua was comprised of one homogenous population that Ortega and his party loyalists could transform for the common good. I argue that Ortega's homogenous nearsightedness made him blind to the diversity around him and his own prejudices against rurality which marginalized families and communities like those in the central-northern mountains where this study took place.

Taken together, these six qualities of governance created difficult work conditions for teachers and local leaders. Challenges were magnified in marginalized communities that did not fit the government mold and where orientations were often impossible to implement because of their unique resources and needs – ignored by the government's one-size-fits-all programs and projects. When results and impact were low in these communities, officials held public servants responsible; they were to blame for any failure. Program success, though, was immediately applauded publicly and in PD spaces with teachers as one more example of Daniel's commitment to societal transformation – and his success. National, state, municipal and local leaders heaped thanks on “el *Comandante*” or simply “Daniel” and expected teachers to do the same in their classrooms and with their school community residents. The expectations to honor and be loyal to the caudillo (Daniel), and adopt his values as communicated in the Sandinista historic memory heroes and events – as communicated daily through the top heavy waterfall of governance – created an environment in which officials of the self-defined “Government of the People” or “The People,

President!”²³ (government slogans) silenced the voices of already marginalized populations and systematically denied opportunities for self-development. Officials of “The Government of National Reconciliation and Unity,” “The People, President!” and government agency’s like “The People’s Ministry of Education” demanded loyal followers and constant approval despite contradictions in policies, for example, that stemmed from contrarianism and the President’s insistence on one-size-fits-all programs and campaigns for which national leaders who designed them often lacked the experience and knowledge to understand challenges regarding their implementation on the ground. As they routinely denied communities and schools the opportunity to discuss and adapt national programs and campaigns to their unique conditions and aspirations, they underscored the importance of their approved values and loyalty.

Because Nicaragua was undergoing an Ortega-guided societal transformation, the broad national context was vital to understand. As a very top-down, hierarchical form of governance, and one Basic National Curriculum and educational system, understanding the broad context in which teachers worked included understanding Daniel Ortega and First Lady Murillo. Ortega entered Nicaraguan politics as a leader in the Sandinista revolution in the early 1970s. He never allowed himself to fall from the political spotlight. Over five decades, he redefined himself multiple times, made many political allies and enemies in the process, and become a polarizing figure – most recently after his unlikely return to the presidency in 2007 with just 38% of the popular vote. Since that year, he consolidated enormous power – with his weakest link being a fledgling, grassroots “movement” created through the waterfall that was obliged to enact his national project locally. Ortega and Murillo mandated that teachers be “principal protagonists” (common phrase) in this local implementation structure. I provide a brief background to this history and governance next.

Background

To understand how and why the Nicaraguan government reached into the daily lives of teachers, a historic perspective is required. Though the teachers in this study came from different backgrounds, they all talked about how Nicaragua’s history of dictatorship, resistance, marginalization and revolution defined them, their families and their communities. Profe Ambrosia was born and raised in San José de la Montaña, a rural

²³ *El Pueblo, Presidente!*

community in the central mountains of Nicaragua. Her life – like many young people of her generation – was marked by the events of July 19, 1979, and the decades-long Sandinista revolution, *Contra* war and U.S. embargo that followed. July 19 was a day of national celebration when the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (Sandinistas, for short) overthrew the Somoza family, the longest-standing and arguably most repressive dictatorship in Latin America (Morris, 2010; Walker & Wade, 2011). That year, Ambrosia attended her last year of high school in a neighbor's home with classmates who were all “*Somocistas*” like her. Their fathers served as members of the National Guard or *Guardia*, the dictator's powerful, brutal and widely feared private army. Sandinistas, an armed resistance movement at the time, had killed Ambrosia's father in March 1979.^{xxx} His status as a regional *Guardia* commander had ensured she and her brothers received a high school education. They could not attend a university to professionalize because they lived miles from the country's three main urban areas, all located within 70 miles of each other in the Pacific Southwest: Leon, Granada and the capital, Managua. The only profession available in the northern mountains was to become teachers.

Profe Fausto was born and raised several hours north of Ambrosia on the northernmost border between Nicaragua and Honduras. He attended the closest schools to his home – in Honduras. There were no schools on the Nicaragua side of the border. In 1970, he began to teach elementary school. Within a few years, *La Guardia* targeted people from his hometown for demanding their rights to land, education, health care and other services. When *Guardia* soldiers killed several family members, Fausto joined the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). After the overthrow of Somoza on July 19, he turned down the lucrative career of becoming a career military officer to serve the Sandinista revolution as a teacher – a career he felt was his calling.

During this study, Professors Ambrosia and Fausto lived in the community of San José de la Montaña. They both worked in El Roble School several kilometers from their respective homes. Despite their families having been arch enemies as *Somocistas* and Sandinistas, they had mixed memories of the Sandinista revolution and the immense, positive changes it brought to their lives and the country. One of the biggest changes, people told me repeatedly, was how the Sandinistas “professionalized an entire generation, a generation whose families had never had that option, ever” (Informal conversation, Arcides, June 2012).

Arcides, Ambrosia's little brother, broke the family pattern of producing teachers and became an agronomist. "And now my daughter is a veterinarian. That was never an option under Somoza or anyone else." By opening opportunities for formal schooling from basic literacy to university professionalization, the Sandinistas showed how education was a fundamental pillar of the revolution and societal change. In "one single action" (Sandinista Ministry of Education slogan, 1980), the Sandinistas combined education with production and national defense (the value of sovereignty) as integral together to national development. But education was not just academic.

Education was called on to play a key role in promoting social change in Nicaragua. Toward that end, the educational system was expected to foster the formation of a "new person," a more critically conscious and participatory citizen motivated by collective goals, and also to promote the transmission of the skills and knowledge necessary to overcome decades of underdevelopment and set the nation on the path of self-sustaining growth. (Arnove, 1995, p. 28)

The Sandinista vision that combined schooling and community organization for the purpose of societal transformation permeated Ortega's Good Government. On his first day back in office in 2007, he announced an immediate return to free, public education for all – a right his neoliberal predecessors had privatized.

Ambrosia, Fausto and all the teachers in this study lived and worked in a unique socio-political and economic context during Ortega's second consecutive presidential term, his third in total. The Nicaraguan government under Ortega was implementing "societal transformation" (government phrase) that Ortega presented as continuity of the U.S.-truncated Sandinista revolution and in conjunction with the other Latin American members of the "Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of our America" (ALBA). Ortega's National Human Development Plan (PNDH²⁴) was its principal "instrument to put public policies, strategies and Nation actions into practice to achieve the reduction of poverty, Human, Social, Economic Development, with justice and through the protagonism of the person, families and community"²⁵ (Vanegas, 2013). The Plan proposed wholesale changes in

²⁴ Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Humano

²⁵ Un instrumento para llevar a la práctica las políticas públicas, estrategias y acciones de Nación, que permitan alcanzar los propósitos de reducción de la pobreza, Desarrollo Humano, Social, Económico, con justicia y desde el protagonismo de la persona, las familias y la comunidad.

national and local government structures and methods, as well as promoting individual changes in ways people think, believe, act and interact.

To be successful, Ortega consolidated his power in all four branches of national government, 90% of local Town Halls (mayors and city councils), and the great majority of community associations and school parent councils. This was necessary, he said, to ensure faithful implementation of the PNDH. Unwavering and enthusiastic implementation coordinated by Ortega would ensure the espoused changes in Nicaraguans' "values, attitudes, priorities, governance styles, relations of power and policies" (Vanegas, 2013, p. 2). First Lady Murillo called it an effort "to transform our Daily Life Culture" and create "indispensable emphasis on the coherency between who we are, what we think and what we do"²⁶ (Murillo, 2013). One way to oversee this coherency was through the waterfall of learning and governance, a principal method of governance under Ortega that pervaded schools and saturated teachers with ongoing orientations that shaped decisions they made in their daily practice.

La Cascada de Aprendizaje or Waterfall of Learning: A Form of Governance

The "waterfall of learning" was a term government officials and teachers used to describe the method and outcome of professional development. I extended this understanding to include how the government worked with teachers. In the waterfall, both learning and governance occurred in a top-down manner with information transmitted from one source to another through a waterfall of people. Because it was the main method the government used to communicate and supervise teachers, I explain it here in some detail.

Ortega and First Lady Murillo designed all government slogans, programs and campaigns with a small group of national leaders who they placed in cabinet, national government offices and top Sandinista Party posts. These leaders communicated how, where and in what time period they wanted specific activities implemented and with whom through a waterfall of loyal followers located around the country in state and municipal offices. Each was assigned a geographical region and grouping of people under their realm of influence and supervision. All staff along the waterfall had a proven commitment to the Sandinista Party and Ortega's "Christian, Socialist, Solidarity" vision of societal transformation. They

²⁶ Nos invitamos, nos convocamos, a trabajar junt@s, a aprender junt@s, nicaragüenses de todas las generaciones, para transformar nuestra Cultura de la Vida Cotidiana, poniendo los énfasis indispensables en la coherencia entre lo que somos, lo que pensamos, y lo que hacemos.

understood Ortega's PNDH and committed to do what was necessary to turn it into reality. This top-down waterfall of governance was designed to control and supervise a uniform discourse and procedural implementation of government projects in every rural community and urban neighborhood at the same time around the nation.

Physically, the waterfall reached from the highest national leaders in Managua down to every school and teacher, health care worker and clinic, government office and public servant. In education, officials along the waterfall assigned and supervised teachers' work and professional development. In addition to orders about government-designed activities, the waterfall carried messages about values and how to put government values into action for the common good through a process of consciousness-raising and building a commitment to *Orteguismo* and an identity around Ortega's vision of transforming people by transforming society.

Leaders at the top of the waterfall were of the highest trust²⁷ level, Ortega's most loyal followers. From the top, they administered a section of a governance pyramid formed by national, state and municipal offices that spread across the entire country at its base. A hand-picked Delegate led each state and municipal government office.²⁸ As their name indicated, they were delegated by Ortega and Murillo to follow top leadership's orientations through well-defined procedures, discourse and activities with strict timelines. Due to geographical distances and weaker personal relationships with each level down the waterfall, national leaders measured loyalty of mid-level leaders by how fully they complied or implemented each orientation provided from above with lower level municipal and local leaders they supervised.

In the Ministry of Education (MINED) at the national level, a Minister, two Vice-Ministers, and 16 national leaders coordinated with First Lady Murillo and members of the Ortega Cabinet to define education policy and implementation procedures; curricular, teacher preparation and professional development programs and tools; horizontal alignment of education with Health, Family and Environmental Ministries; educational discourse and dissemination of education activities and programs. National MINED offices were organized by "divisions" by school level or program, such as Primary Education and the Integral

²⁷ *De confianza*

²⁸ Delegados and Delegadas

School Nutrition Program (PINE). From their Managua offices, these national leaders communicated and supervised 17 MINED state offices that in turn communicated and supervised 153 MINED municipal offices.

Each state and municipal office was organized differently from the “more structured work” of the national MINED. Their organization reflected their purpose: to communicate and supervise implementation in their respective geographical areas, e.g., their state or municipality, of what the national offices had designed. The Delegate of each mid-level office was a political appointee, hired and fired by First Lady Murillo or the Minister of Education at her behest. About half of each Delegate’s staff was pedagogic advisors (previously supervisors) and half were administrative personnel. They coordinated with their Sandinista Party equivalent from their geographical area (e.g., state-state) to implement their work. Technical knowledge or experience in education – to be a state or municipal pedagogic advisor, for example – was less important than Sandinista loyalty. This was due in part to orientations that expanded school activities and teacher responsibilities to include societal transformation actions, community cohesion and organization related to Ortega’s National Plan.

This network of Ortega loyalists extended across Nicaragua’s 50,000 square miles of territory and ensured saturation of messaging and supervision through horizontal and vertical coordination. Vertical coordination in the MINED, for example, occurred among all levels of the Ministry, from the Minister and each Delegate on down to each school, principal and teacher. Within each state and municipality, staff coordinated horizontally across state or municipal government offices and Sandinista Party organizations. At the bottom of this institutionalized pyramid in education, principals and teachers coordinated vertically with Municipal MINED officials who gave them marching orders and supervised implementation. Principals coordinated horizontally with teachers in their school and local Sandinista youth and Community Cabinet leaders in their school communities. This local team implemented orientations they received from Municipal MINED officials. When authorized to do so, local team members coordinated with the Mayor and local government Ministries, particularly in relation to preventative health care, environmental protection, disaster mitigation and issues related to the family (and Ministry of the Family).

To control teacher actions the government designed to benefit the population and change teacher beliefs and understandings over time (to embrace the government project and their role in Sandinista community development), Ortega extended loyalty requirements to school principals. Principals had to be trustworthy Sandinistas because they had to ensure correct implementation of orientations at each school – with teachers and community members. With their expanded responsibilities, it made sense that principals become political appointees. Principal Fausto estimated that his position was a ratio of somewhere between 70:30 or 60:40 political-to-education criteria. He had been named the school principal and 5th/6th grade teacher in 2007 when Ortega replaced all MINED staff and most school principals, a formidable restructuring process that had suspended most MINED activity in state and municipal offices for the first months of his presidency. The Municipal MINED Delegate ordered Profe Ambrosia, who had served as principal and 5th/6th grade teachers for the previous 17 years under neo-liberal and actively anti-Sandinista governments, to be a 1st – 4th grade teacher.

Monthly and weekly orientations were designed at the national level. National leaders communicated program information and required actions in face-to-face meetings with state and municipal MINED staff, including how, what and when to communicate orders to teachers in their respective geographical area (usually in 24 – 48 hours). State and municipal MINED staff then met with principals to pass along the same information they were to communicate directly to teachers in MINED-organized meetings (in 24 – 48 hours), telephone texts and informal networks teachers created among close colleagues. The final round of orientations in the waterfall defined what each teacher was to do, how they were to do it, in what time period, and with whom – and self-reporting required for their supervisors once their work was finished. The waterfall structure moderated places and times for questioning, disagreement or resistance, with mid-level and local implementers honestly telling people who raised any concerns or new ideas that they were “just following orders” or “please just do it so I don’t get into trouble.”²⁹ Another common response, “You don’t want to call attention to yourself,” raised the specter of threats and punishments common in MINED messaging and was so effective that I heard teachers reminding themselves of this danger more than I heard MINED officials playing that role.

²⁹ Nosotros también sólo estamos siguiendo orientaciones. Favor hacerlo para no meterme en problemas.

The waterfall also secured a lock-step formation among government officials in their externally orchestrated and highly synchronized actions and discourse regarding expectations, monitoring, supervision and evaluation. MINED Delegates, for example, received orders about what reports to collect within 24 – 48 hours regarding program implementation from all schools under their supervision. Reports focused on easily measurable aspects of compliance that municipal staff aggregated into one municipal report to send to state offices, where state staff aggregated municipal reports into a state-level report to send to national leaders. Reporting used the same pyramid structure with information flowing through the waterfall in the opposite direction. Timelines for Municipal-level and then State-level reports were often so tight and last-minute there was no time for analysis – just compliance with data collection and aggregation.

Officials measured program and campaign success with simplified dichotomous or numerical indicators they repeatedly collected over time and rarely published in aggregated form. The most common for community projects was the number of participants or beneficiaries. The most common for teacher professional development was absent/present and complied/did not comply. The most common for students was grades on each quarterly report card. With the focus on collecting very specific and limited data, the supervisory procedure left no time or space for discussing or evaluating why compliance varied. It also relegated the measurement of impact or more distal but important outcomes to the periphery or discourse only. For example, by counting the number of beneficiaries and declaring success based on participation in a community project, no information was collected or discussed about its functioning or its short or long term impacts. By counting how many teachers participated in professional development, there was no conversation about what teachers understood, what they are putting into practice, and how it is affecting student learning. By collecting report card information, there was no conversation about why students were doing so poorly, particularly in math and language arts. When a project did not reach its professed goals, the government either moved on with little to no comment, blamed the most local of project implementers (e.g., teachers) for not doing their job or explained challenges in terms of individual motivation and consciousness-raising.

Ortega promoted himself and justified his PNDH with the nation by using an historic narrative of heroes and events that underscored certain values and values in action - shared

values in which all Nicaraguans believed. The waterfall ensured national saturation of his values messages. His trademark “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” slogan reminded people that shared Nicaraguan values undergirded all actions his government took and he used them to invite and inspire people to join him. His historic narrative provided symbols and uplifting messages that Ortega embedded in slogans as well as program and campaign names, purposes and actions. In the next section, I introduce the concept of historic memory in research and Latin America, how and why Ortega it used it in Nicaragua, and how different teacher beliefs and actions were defined in part by the memories and values in this official historic memory.

La Memoria Histórica: A Narrative for Social Cohesion through Participation for Change

Historic memory, cultural memory and communicative memory comprise an interdisciplinary area of study of societal responses to national trauma like the Holocaust, remembrances around 9/11 and Ground Zero, and the use of Truth Commissions in South African and Latin America (Erll, 2011). Historic memories in Latin America have been integral parts of national recovery and reconciliation processes post-dictatorships. They have been integral to claiming the voices of those silenced, recalibrating dictatorship narratives to denounce their illegal actions, and creating new governance structures and institutions that greatly reduce possibilities for a new dictatorship to take root. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas created a historic memory that celebrated revolutionary values put into practice by independence heroes, Sandinista fighters and events that helped heal Nicaragua after the devastation and trauma of the Somoza dictatorship. Ortega used this narrative to give meaning to himself as the president, his national project and the ways he governed. In this section, I focus my analysis on a main actor (Sandino) and event (the National Literacy Crusade) because they were prominent symbols and gave meaning to Ortega’s efforts and teachers’ new role in societal transformation from schools and classrooms. This focus stems from what teacher, family and government officials’ discourse and actions, as well as the values education curriculum.

Each Nicaraguan hero and event commemorated by officials, public servants and the general public symbolized a set of values, beliefs and actions. The historic narrative reminded people of their shared history and Nicaraguan character of strength and courage,

principled anti-imperialist sentiment and national pride. Commemorations provided teachers and families to talk of historical events and people that affected them personally – a family member who died in the Sandinista revolution or contra war; their own forced service to protect the revolution in the 1980s; memories of Somoza and his hated National Guard.

Through story, Ortega modeled values education in and out of school, providing content and tools for how teachers and local leaders should replicate what he did in their local commemorations of heroes and past events. In school assemblies, Fausto would reiterate points Ortega had spoken of the previous night during a national commemoration of a Sandinista point in history, a leader's birth or death, or information Murillo gave in her daily address to the nation, like an international day of celebration of a specific value related to women or the environment. With the majority of the Nicaraguan population under 24 years old, Ortega's and Murillo's narratives introduced youth to Ortega's governance through the lens of continuing the historic Sandinista revolution and its values. The historic memory's stories invited young people to join with others in Sandinista Youth organizations; they invited people to work on nationally-organized campaigns and benefit from government programs, to commit themselves to working together towards a better future for all.

La memoria histórica as reconciliation, healing, social cohesion and action.

During the 20th century, organized civilian resistance to U.S.-backed dictatorships in Latin America created competing collective memories. Dictators framed repressive tactics against their own citizenry as heroic actions in the fight against communism. Resistance movements, often guided by liberation theology beliefs, framed dictators' actions as the country's poor organizing for basic human and civil rights including freedom of expression and movement, social services, and an end to government repression. Memory studies explain these competing narratives as struggles for "conquering cultural, political and ideological zones that...are never empty but loaded with presences, symbols, and meanings" (Kaiser, 2011, p. 115). In Nicaragua, Somoza presented himself as the anti-communist champion and a symbol of freedom. He spoke of General Sandino as a dangerously deranged man whose ideological and religious beliefs were incoherent and dangerous to society (Hodges, 1986). Decades later, the Sandinistas reconstructed the same events of the Somoza dictatorship and Sandino's "Defending Army of Nicaragua's National Sovereignty."

The Sandinista memory of the same historic people and events gave voice to and celebrated those who fought against Somoza, his National Guardsmen, and his primary protector and benefactor: the United States. It uncovered the *Guardia* as one of the most repressive forces in Latin America, as well as one of the most corrupt. It depicted the Somoza family as brutally terrorizing and murdering unarmed Nicaraguans living in extreme poverty whose crime was demanding basic rights the dictatorship systematically denied. It showed the U.S. as an imperialist force intent on protecting its economic and socio-political interests in the region at any cost, including the funding and cover-up of the murders of thousands of Nicaraguan civilians. These competing memories were embedded in differing beliefs regarding national sovereignty and religion, conflicting ideological beliefs regarding viable economic and socio-political systems, and divergent concepts of justice, equality and citizen participation.

The Sandinista narrative helped the nation confront the trauma suffered under Somoza, condemn its perpetrators, celebrate its heroes and move towards greater social cohesion. For the first time, it celebrated the bravery and vision of those who Somoza had criminalized, disparaged, tortured and killed. It resoundingly debunked Somoza's anti-communist myths and presented the dictatorship as the failings of one man and his family, with the support of a small greedy elite working with the U.S. – and their anti-values in action. The organized civilian resistance represented the ideal of Nicaraguan society, of those risking their lives for the promise of equality, the common good and justice in a society they knew they would never see. They were a proud reflection of the entire society and the true values upon which it operated, trying to solve enormous challenges together – and succeeding.

This shared reclaiming of voices and actions turned a generalized fear, anger and anguish in post-dictatorship society to hope. Truth Commissions and Human Rights offices investigated war crimes to condemn rather than condone intellectual and material authors of institutionalized violence, and lay the foundation for forgiveness, national reconciliation and unity in a deeply polarized society. Through vividly remembering national trauma and state terror, historic memory narratives raised a strong and clear message of “never again” and “never forget, never pardon” (Jelin, 1994, p. 39). The Sandinistas used this process of reconciliation to institutionalize transparent governance and civil society by building

consensus around how to dismantle policies and institutions steeped in the dictatorship (e.g., the *Guardia*). One important change was a constitutional amendment that permitted only two non-consecutive 5-year terms for a President; the Somoza family had governed the equivalent of nine consecutive terms.

A strong, organized civil society was the ultimate hero in most Latin American historic memories, celebrated in the memory of past resistance struggles that justified the programs and policies of new burgeoning democracies (Erll, 2011). Ortega wrapped a history of Sandinista heroes and events into inspirational tales of caution and courage while presenting an argument for his national plan as the only path to a better future – and one that continued the unfinished struggle of the country’s past heroes. In Nicaragua, Ortega argued that Sandino had the same values as he and his project did, which were the same values all Nicaraguans shared. Daniel was a contemporary Sandino who fought for his country and continued to stand up to U.S. imperialism. I tell a portion of Sandino’s history below to show how Ortega accomplished this messaging using Sandino’s life story.

Augusto Sandino, 1893-1934: A diminutive superhero to inspire and emulate. To understand and appreciate Augusto Sandino’s life and achievements, one has to understand the history of U.S. influence in Nicaragua that Sandino fought against. For Nicaraguans, almost two centuries of U.S. interference in Nicaragua was summed up with one term I heard daily: *el imperialismo Yanqui* (Yankee imperialism). It represented a Nicaraguan condition that would never have existed without the participation of a tiny Nicaraguan elite and Catholic Church hierarchy that benefited from it at the expense of all others. In contrast to the anti-values of this small elite – of imperialism, greed and repression – Sandino symbolized and evoked the best of what it meant to be Nicaraguan. He was a Nicaraguan from humble roots who never allowed his suffering to define him but rather took strength from it so he could contribute to improve his country; he was a Nicaraguan who rejected the ruling wealthy elite that he saw destroying his country and organized others to join him to accomplish the impossible: expunge Yankee imperialist villains from their country; a Nicaraguan who fought and died for national sovereignty, a treasured notion that once recovered Nicaraguans swore they would never lose it again. Sandino’s story offered clear juxtapositions in simple dichotomies: good won over evil, courage over cowardice, visionaries over sell-outs, and personal greed over commitment to the common good. Ortega

made subtle parallels: the Sandinistas like Sandino surprised the world when they overthrew Somoza. Ortega, like Sandino, was willing to stand up to the U.S. The Ortega project and vision of human development, equality and justice would win over the negative effects and constant threats from neo-liberal policies imposed by the U.S. and multi-lateral agencies throughout Latin America.

When Sandino was born in the late 19th century, Nicaragua had been co-governed for more than six decades with an overwhelming presence of U.S. businesspeople, U.S. Congressional and presidential decisions, illegal treaties, and waves of mercenaries and Marines to keep order. Nicaragua was “the quintessential banana republic, a society in which an impoverished peasantry labored for local elites who grew crops for export rather than developing industrial or viable local economies” (Morris, 2010, p. 10). By the early 1900s, U.S. citizens owned almost 15% of coffee-growing lands, made them profitable by subjugating landless workers in the central and northern mountains and extracted raw materials for export. “Nicaragua’s banks, customs office, and railroads were signed over to American bankers” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 5) and the U.S. administered tax collection and national mines (Navarro-Génie, 2002). The 1914 Bryan-Chamorro Treaty gave the U.S. all rights to construct the interoceanic canal into perpetuity, as well as a naval base in the Gulf of Fonseca (shared with El Salvador and Honduras who were not party to the treaty)^{xxx}. These unilateral agreements and profiteering relied on constant repression of the Nicaraguan majority most of whom lived in extreme poverty.

The U.S. justified the ongoing presence of its Marines as necessary to protect American life and property (e.g., economic interests), viewing Central America as an untamed jungle backwater, its people not full human beings. Just before the U.S. civil war, William Walker violently installed himself as Nicaragua’s president, proclaimed Nicaragua’s official language English, wrestled options for building the canal away from Vanderbilt, and announced he would ship Nicaraguans as slaves to the Confederate South if it separated from the Union. He was “filibustering,” leading a group of “US citizen-mercenaries who invaded friendly nations within a perceived US sphere of influence” (Solomon, 2011, p. 106) as part of U.S. manifest destiny. Attitudes about the expendability of Central Americans were revealed in a New York Times in 1856 that read in part:

Central America is destined to occupy an influential position in the family of nations, if her advantages of location, climate and soil are availed by a race of ‘Northmen’ who shall supplant the tainted, mongrel and decaying race which now curses it so fearfully. (Solomon, 2001, p. 106-107)

Mexicans and Central America neighbors called Nicaraguans *vende-patrias* (Ramírez, 1988), or homeland sell-outs – a term that reportedly hurt Sandino so deeply it became part of his inspiration that guided his determination and persistence in seeking societal change. U.S. military incursions increased in number after the failed William Walker presidency into the first years of the Great Depression, when the U.S. could no longer sustain its long-term Marine presence. According to the historic memory, these conditions moved a young Augusto Sandino to action in the mid-1920s until he kicked out the *Yanqui* imperialists in 1932.

An historic memory that notably brought pain to many contemporary Nicaraguans was the dreaded *Guardia*, Somoza’s private army that is believed to have killed tens of thousands of ordinary Nicaraguans and generally terrorized the population for almost five decades. Before ending their last 20-year occupation (1912-1932), the Marines formed and trained the Nicaraguan National Guard or *Guardia* as an occupying force whose primary responsibility was to protect U.S. lives and property in Nicaragua at any cost (Morris, 2010). The U.S. government also ensured a political transition and a new president upon their retreat: Anastasio Somoza, a military official who had attended school in Philadelphia, spoke fluent English, and was eager to maintain relations with key U.S. political and business leaders in the U.S. Somoza’s National Guard assassinated Sandino; Somoza was widely believed to have been the intellectual author of the cowardly execution. Sandino’s commemoration included the memory of the Sandinistas ending Somoza’s long reign of terror which began after killing his nemesis, Sandino.

Sandino and his small army of ill-equipped farmers were a complete contrast to the *vendepatria*, unprincipled Nicaraguan elite and *Yanqui* imperialists. Sandino, when offered money and land for his surrender loudly declared that he was not for sale. His concern that “the eternal destiny of the nation was being sold off and delivered [to the U.S.]”³⁰ (Ramírez, 1988, p. xxiv) inspired Sandino to fight as hard as he could to evict the *Yanqui* imperialists

³⁰ El eterno destino de la nación: la venta, la entrega

from Nicaragua's lands, denigrated and pillaged for too long by the Marine presence (Ramírez, 1988; Hodges, 2014). After his unlikely ragtag Army won more and more battles across northern and central Nicaragua, then into the south and Pacific west of the country, the U.S. Marines were forced to leave Nicaragua. The next day Sandino and Somoza negotiated a cease-fire. His success against incredible odds raised another theme throughout the *memoria histórica*: Nicaraguans could do anything when they worked together as one people. Sandino's achievements were tied to the values he enacted and lived by – and for what he was murdered. He had achieved what “the politicians who delivered themselves to the interests of the Yanqui companies never had taken into account: our nationality...[and] the right to not be bound to an empire”³¹ (Ramírez, 1988, p. xxxvii). He had also become too powerful. Somoza's National Guard killed Sandino and two of his generals soon thereafter in February 1934. What Somoza and many others failed to understand was a common revolutionary principle: when you kill one revolutionary, five more will take his or her place. Sandino's life and death guided an entire revolution forty-five years later, and its revival under Ortega 73 years following his death.

National and local remembering of Sandino: Discourse, content and messaging.

The image of Sandino's small, thin body topped with a wide-brimmed hat was a national symbol of liberation and the struggle for sovereignty and against injustice. His ideological pluralism – a mix of anarchist, socialist and communist ideas with spiritual beliefs from his experiences among the Mexican Freemasons, Mexican Spiritualists and Spiritists (Hodges, 1986, Navarro-Génie, 2002) – was an example of his political astuteness and ability to mobilize support among people from widely divergent walks of life and political-philosophical views (Ramírez, 1988). The Ortega Government of National Reconciliation and Unity (GRUN) continued Sandino's pluralistic tradition.

The “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” slogan proffered multiple values Ortega and Murillo incorporated into all government program names, purposes, implementation procedures and expected outcomes. Biblical references were commonplace in government discourse. Murillo described Ortega's 2011 electoral campaign as “the campaign that multiplies bread (feeding the multitude), where God works Miracles, so that good is

³¹ Los políticos entregados a los intereses de las compañías Yanquis nunca habían tenido en cuenta: el de la nacionalidad...el derecho de no ser colonos de un imperio.

established³²” (Pérez-Baltodano, 2012, p. 217). She praised his efforts to build the historically elusive inter-oceanic canal as “represent[ing] the true application of Christianity, of Socialism, of Solidarity, in that we will live well – secure, healthy, beautiful, clean, beyond poverty of any kind” (Anderson, 2014). Ortega, like Sandino, was similarly all-powerful and bigger-than-life, and exactly the person to help Nicaragua become “blessed and prosperous” (government slogan).

The streets of every Nicaraguan city were bestowed with many renditions of General Augusto Sandino. Every image highlighted his petite figure looking straight ahead, head tilted to one side, a wide *sombrero* casting a shadow over his face (see drawings and photo below). Black metal cut-outs of his silhouetted figure were prominent on hilltops, paintings were hung in every government office, posters filled walls at schools and health clinics, and larger-than-life Sandino statues dominated major urban thoroughfares. In addition to these



Photo 1. “Nicaragua will be free as long as it has sons that love it.” Painting of Sandinista Revolution martyrs and Sandino



Photo 2. Poem to Sandino

³² La campaña de multiplicación de los panes, donde Dios obra Milagros, para que el bien se establezca



Photo 3. Larger-than-life statue in the nation's capital, Managua.

physical reminders, the government held annual commemorations of “The Journey to Immortality of General Augusto C. Sandino” (Consejo de Comunicación y Ciudadanía, 2014). Through the historic narrative, officials messaged themes and values it related to Ortega’s governance and the importance of civil society and organization. Sandino’s story reminded every Nicaraguan that he or she could and should fight for justice and equality until it was achieved. The national commemorations served as models and inspiration for school principals and teachers to hold local commemorations in their schools, classrooms, and school communities as part of values education.

An important aspect of remembering through historic narrative was the messaging to different parts of the Nicaraguan population, including young people who were not alive during the revolution and older generations who had mixed reactions to Ortega as their leader. I use parts of Ortega’s 2014 commemoration of Sandino to show the variety of messages these events conveyed and how Ortega positioned himself as similar to Sandino and used the national hero’s life to justify his government programs and invite people to join them.

A central theme of all Sandino commemorations was the power of U.S. imperialism, its negative effects around the world and how the only way to respond was through organization and solidarity, nationally and internationally. At the 2014 commemoration, Ortega introduced Brian Wilson, a U.S. Vietnam war veteran who had become a double amputee seventeen years *after* returning to the U.S. when he and other vets tried to stop a train shipment of white phosphorous rockets, 500-pound bombs and other munitions en route to Nicaragua and El Salvador to be used mostly on unarmed civilian populations. Wilson had

sat down on the railroad tracks with two other veterans to stop the train, Ortega recounted, but the train's engineer was ordered to not stop. It ran him over, ripped off both legs and fractured his skull. Ortega pointed to the contradictions of the U.S. feigning respect of human rights and the right to protest in discourse and its imperialist nature in its actions. He provided stark contrasts between imperialists and anti-imperialists, repeatedly using words like "*Yanqui* imperialists" and "Empire" to deride the U.S. and characterizing anti-imperialism as actions built upon beliefs of justice and the right to national sovereignty. A clear message was how anti-imperialism was not just an idea or sentiment; it required sustained action and constant vigilance.

Solidarity was one of the three overarching values in Ortega's "Christian, Socialist, Solidarity" project; international solidarity was particularly important to be able to stand up to the U.S. and sustain national transformations toward equity. Nicaragua was an active member with other Latin American and Caribbean nations in the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of our America (ALBA)^{xxxii} which itself was polarizing across ideological and political party lines. According to Ortega, the only recourse against *Yanqui* imperialism was a unified Latin America because the U.S. was an empire "that does not accept that we unite, that we integrate ourselves; that does not accept that we are Free. That wants us only as slaves, not as Free Citizens."³³ Ortega reminded people of how U.S. discourse on democracy contrasted with experiences in Latin America where countries had suffered U.S.-backed dictatorships, repression and economic exploitation. It had rejected and overthrown democratically elected governments. "The only governments they recognize, arm, finance and defend are those that subject themselves to the Empire. Those are the ones they call 'Democrats,'"³⁴ Ortega declared.

He then took on another common role in the commemoration narratives: that of the leader on high moral ground lecturing the United States for its immoral and illegal acts. He showed a series of images on a large screen: the U.S. government spying on its citizens, immigrants assassinated while crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, mistreatment of Guantanamo prisoners, police attacking women and clergy in peaceful Occupy Wall Street

³³ Que no acepta que nos unamos, que nos integremos; que no acepta que seamos Libres. Que nos quiere únicamente como esclav@s, no como Ciudadan@s Libres

³⁴ Los únicos Gobiernos que ellos reconocen, arman, financian, y defienden, son aquellos que se les someten al Imperio. Esos son los que ellos llaman 'Demócratas.'"

protests.^{xxxiii} “And that is not in Caracas [Venezuela]...that is not in Nicaragua, that is in the United States of North America!”³⁵ He paused before continuing.

What can we say to the United States government? “Don’t rip your clothes!” [Don’t be hypocritical!] Respect human rights and the rights of the citizens in your country, your citizens. Because if you are not capable of respecting the human rights in your own country, of your own citizens, how are you going to be capable of respecting the human rights of the Peoples of the World! How are you going to be capable of respecting the human rights of the Revolutionary Countries that struggle for Freedom and Justice!³⁶

Daniel called on the U.S. to respect Latin American countries’ decisions, to mobilize its great resources for regional stabilization programs, and work against poverty and extreme poverty.^{xxxiv} He scolded the U.S. and suggested that instead of illegally funding destabilization in the region, the U.S. should implement domestic policies of respect, work, education and health care for its own citizens. Many Nicaraguans who did not support Ortega enjoyed these parts of his commemorations, for the show and the deep sentiments people felt against U.S. imperialism.

Daniel finished with another important theme of the *memoria histórica*: patriotism and love of a homeland that everyone had to defend together. Otherwise, they risked losing their sovereignty again. He recalled the long, difficult struggle against the empire to get to where they were today, what he called a well-earned balance and peace. He reminded people they were combatting poverty together to improve the lives of many Nicaraguan families. They could not allow the U.S. to invade once more and destroy their creation. He affirmed repeatedly that their successes were due to the revolutionary struggle in which everyone worked closely together, and their “Faith in God, Faith in Christ [meant] having Faith in the People.” With several Biblical references, he finished with a declaration of love for his “Nicaraguan brother and sisters, Nicaraguan families,” and hope that the U.S. would change

³⁵ Y esto no es en Caracas, esto no es en Venezuela, esto no es en Nicaragua, ¡esto es en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica!

³⁶ ¡No se rasguen las vestiduras! Empiecen por respetar los Derechos Humanos y los Derechos Ciudadanos en su País, a sus Ciudadan@s. Porque si no son capaces de respetar los Derechos Humanos en su País, de sus Ciudadanos, ¡qué van a ser capaces de respetar los Derechos Humanos de los Pueblos del Mundo! ¡Qué van a ser capaces de respetar los Derechos Humanos de los Pueblos Revolucionarios que luchan por la Libertad y por la Justicia!

its colonial ways, stop dictating policies and imposing governments. Ortega presented himself as a national unifier, protector, and visionary.

Ortega consistently invoked a critical part of his project: citizen participation. He declared his faith in the power of organization and unity in Nicaragua and the U.S.

The day will come when it will be the People of North America who will provoke the changes in the United States...and they will convert it into a truly Democratic Nation in Solidarity with the People of the World, and with Peace.³⁷ (Consejo de Comunicación y Ciudadanía, 2014)

Sandino had fought against all odds against the world's superpower through organization and Ortega was doing the same. Together, in Sandino's footsteps, they would transform Nicaraguan society for the better, for the common good. Sandino was present in the ongoing struggle by all Nicaraguans for equality, sovereignty and justice (Common chants were: "Long live Sandino!" and "Sandino Lives!"³⁸). Sandino's life story engendered deep national pride and a recommitment to stand together against any imperialist or hegemonic acts against the country – from the U.S., Costa Rica or Columbia. He gave Nicaraguans hope, pride and a vision; his story inspired many people to join with Ortega in his movement for change.

In addition to honoring heroes like Sandino, Ortega commemorated defining historic events as well. One was the Great National Literacy Crusade.³⁹ In re-telling stories of the 1980 Crusade, Ortega told of how 100,000 young people left their homes to help others in need and irrevocably altered Nicaragua's future. He underscored his unwavering belief that youth could implement societal changes – and how the nation needed them to commit to their country. As President, Ortega institutionalized many symbols and methods used during the Crusade into formal schooling and values education. Students celebrated its memory at least

³⁷ Herman@s nicaragüenses, Familias nicaragüenses...aislemos aquellos sembradores de cizaña... Porque bien lo dijo Cristo: Ahí aparece la cizaña. Lo dijo entonces, y la cizaña no deja de aparecer. Y la cizaña no va a dejar de aparecer hasta que no desaparezcan en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, en los países que tienen tendencia hegemónica, sea en Europa, en los Estados Unidos, los que quieren dictar Políticas, imponer Gobiernos, cambiar Gobiernos...Porque ahí están las bases del Colonialismo a lo largo de nuestra Historia de lo que fue la esclavización de millones de Seres Humanos, convertidos en esclavos ¿en nombre de qué? ¡En nombre de la Civilización! Pero tenemos Fé, y teniendo Fé en Dios, Fé en Cristo, significa tener Fé en los Pueblos. Y estamos seguros, estamos convencidos, que llegará el día que será el propio Pueblo norteamericano el que va a provocar los cambios en los Estados Unidos, que harán desaparecer la naturaleza imperialista de esa Nación, y la convertirán en una verdadera Nación Democrática y Solidaria con los Pueblos del Mundo, y con la Paz. ¡Que Viva Sandino...! ¡Sandino Vive...! ¡Que Viva Chávez...!

³⁸ ¡Que Viva Sandino...! ¡Sandino Vive...!

³⁹ Gran Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización

every week if not daily in most schools when they sang the Crusade anthem. High school graduates walked in the footsteps of unnamed Crusade heroes, when they fulfilled a new graduation requirement of teaching adult literacy in their respective communities. Ortega resuscitated the Crusade's PD method – a waterfall of learning – as the principal method used with teachers under his leadership. His revival of the Crusade in his national project demonstrated shared beliefs and understandings about teaching, learning, and schooling that defined his education policies and programs. In the next section, I describe the Crusade and its historic narrative as well as how Ortega used it in the present.

The National Literacy Crusade, “Heroes and Martyrs for the Freedom of Nicaragua,” March-August 1980. The National Literacy Crusade was a source of tremendous national pride. Government officials used it to remind youth, teachers and others of the promise and excitement that surrounded the Sandinista revolution in its first year when the vast majority of the population supported the Sandinista ouster of Somoza. When the revolutionary Junta came to power, people joined together to undertake the enormous task of rebuilding the country from almost complete ruins. The Sandinistas always believed that education was an equalizer and a resource the dictatorship had kept from people to keep them ignorant. With this in mind, the revolution mobilized and trained 100,000 young urban high school and college students as literacy educators to provide literacy classes^{xxxv} to rural families who had never had the opportunity to attend school during Somoza's reign.

An illiteracy map at that time showed a marked difference between a relatively literate population in the Pacific Southwest and those who lived in the rest of the country. Though the national illiteracy rate was 50.35%, regional rates in central-northwestern rural mountain communities (68-71%) and along the Atlantic Coast (87%) were much higher. To address these education inequities, the Sandinista Junta issued a call to young students to join the Sandinista Youth Literacy Brigades to become the foot soldiers of a Sandinista “cultural revolution” (official anthem). No one was concerned about their lack of experience or knowledge regarding how to teach literacy. The young people's revolutionary fervor was sufficient to teach rural youth and adults to read, write and do basic math.

The Sandinistas had to train the almost 100,000 crusaders in a very short period of time. They began with a fifteen day training of eighty loyal⁴⁰ Sandinista leaders. Within days

⁴⁰ de confianza

of that initial training, those 80 first-level recently-certified literacy trainers split into small groups to replicate the training they had just received with 560 Sandinista youth – in 15 days. The 560 newly trained literacy educators then immediately replicated their replicated training with 7,000 young people. The now almost 8,000 trainers began to prepare an army of 95,582 young literacy teachers in 10-day trainings (in 5 days less or one third less time than the original training). The majority of literacy educators were trained in what people called a waterfall of learning, which was a waterfall of replications of replications of replications. Each level of training occurred within a shorter period of time with less knowledge and experience by the trainers than its predecessor. The farther down the waterfall of learning the less knowledge trainers had regarding literacy, the literacy curriculum, Sandinista Party ideology and the revolutionary project. They also possessed fewer physical resources with which to train greater numbers of people. In the last two levels of replications in which the bulk of literacy educators were trained, trainers were given a third less time to help their students learn.

By March 24, 1980, the almost 100,000 Sandinista youth fanned out across the northern mountains and eastern plains in military formation and attire. The Crusade's implementation structure was similar to the pyramid and waterfall of governance used by Ortega (explained at the beginning). A small group of national leaders coordinated with the Crusade's high command spread across seven fronts (i.e., military fronts), with each front coordinating literacy efforts in two to four states. "Front" leaders coordinated with the Municipal brigade leaders within their states, while brigade leaders coordinated with squadron leaders in their municipality. Squadron leaders coordinated multiple Columns of literacy educators who were organized in smaller units within each *conmarca* or grouping of rural communities. Each front, brigade, column and squadron was named for a Sandinista hero killed during the armed insurrection of the 1970s. This original waterfall of governance through a military-style pyramid structure and hierarchy ensured uniform and synchronized implementation of Crusade content, discipline, revolutionary ideology and actions over its four months of implementation. This was what Ortega characterized in 2009 as "one of the greatest expressions of popular participation," when he decreed the Crusade's anthem the Education Hymn of Nicaragua.

The Crusade's literacy curriculum had 23 themes. They included revolutionary concepts and slogans that provided adult students with new knowledge, values, and ways of living, thinking and knowing based on revolutionary ideals and urban lifestyles. The literacy educators had been taught about the revolution's purpose and programs in their training so they could impart that knowledge to rural families as they taught them to read and write. Pedagogy comprised following the workbook in order. The focus was on curricular content, not how to teach it. Educators were to use the curriculum's revolutionary slogans and phrases as conversation starters and simple sentences to copy. Literacy educators held 2-hour sessions with their students three to five days each week for a maximum of four months. According to Sandinista reports to the United Nations, the 95,000-person Popular Literacy Army^{41xxxvi} reduced illiteracy from over 50% to just under 13% (Berset, 2006). Between late March and early August 1980, the waterfall of learning helped 406,056 Nicaraguans learn to read and write (Cermeño, 2011). The Crusade was recognized nationally and internationally as a huge success.

An enormous part of the Crusade's success was in meeting two political objectives that Sandinista youth groups articulated in written commemorations on their websites. The first was to raise consciousness and support for the revolution among rural families through formal education. "In the process of learning how to read, our workers and farmers will learn about their dignity, their history, their country, their Revolution,"⁴² the Network of Youth Communicators⁴³ declared (2013). The urban youth "introduced the social reality of Nicaragua to the world of thousands of farmers to whom the reality had been hidden for so long by *Somocismo*" (Red de Jóvenes Comunicadores, n.d.). The second objective was to develop political leadership among the youth educators: "To make our young people participate in national change and give them the most important formative opportunity of their youth...[and] to take advantage of the mobilization of youth to begin other projects of national interest"⁴⁴ (Red de Jóvenes Comunicadores, n.d.).

⁴¹ Ejército Popular de Alfabetización

⁴² En el mismo proceso de aprendizaje de la lectura, aprenderán nuestros obreros y campesinos a conocer su dignidad, su historia, su país, su Revolución.

⁴³ Red de Jóvenes Comunicadores

⁴⁴ Introducir la realidad social de Nicaragua al Mundo a los miles de campesinos a quienes, la realidad estaba oculta por tanto tiempo por el somocismo...Hacer de nuestros jóvenes participen del cambio nacional y darles la oportunidad formativa más importante de su juventud...Aprovechar la movilización de jóvenes para iniciar otros proyectos de interés nacional.

The Crusade was critical to the revolution's success in raising consciousness about and support for its national project in broad swaths of the population and in creating new leaders whose loyalty and understanding would deepen with each national project in which they participated. Because they had overthrown Somoza in a relatively short period of time, the Sandinistas began as a vanguard movement that brought together sectors of the population that had little in common other than being against Somoza. They had to educate people about their revolutionary project as it developed, which related to their more pressing need to develop a cadre of political leaders committed to making, sustaining and strengthening the revolution. A revolutionary education could never be taught or learned in a classroom. Revolutionaries gained knowledge and commitment through taking action with others combined with a political education and sacrifice based on understanding and committing to enact revolutionary values putting them into practice with others – for the common good with a focus on those less fortunate and most marginalized. A crusader reflected on this process more than 30 years later. “I am a witness to all that was achieved in [the crusade], I love my revolution... when being young was enjoyment, unity, hope, participation, I grew up in that genuine process that we called Revolution”⁴⁵ (Cermeño, 2011, n.p.). By taking part in highly coordinated actions like the Crusade, protagonists and participants began to align their knowledge about the past and present with beliefs about justice and equality – and their ability to make change together through the revolution.

Historical accounts abounded regarding the literacy educators, while only brief mention was given to those who learned to read and write. Reports detailed the numbers of crusaders in each region, what they wore, what they ate and detailed testimonials on how their lives changed. The rural and indigenous peoples were reduced to numbers and mentions of challenging conditions in which they lived. The notable absence of rural and indigenous voices in Crusade commemorations – and the focus on rural deficits – stemmed from Sandinista leaders' understandings of rural life. As Sandinistas presented the Crusade as proof of their commitment to the poor and a contrast to Somoza's systematic refusal to provide formal schooling to rural communities, the Crusade design and implementation evoked some of the same prejudices against the communities Somoza had most victimized.

⁴⁵ Soy testigo de todo lo que se realizó en ella, amo mi revolución, amo aquellos años en la que el ser joven era gozo, unidad, esperanza participación, crecí en ese proceso genuino que le llamábamos Revolución. Felicito a todos mis hermanos que hicimos posible este triunfo.

Sandinista *brigadistas* or literacy educators, many of whom became Sandinista leaders during the rest of the revolution, were trained under the slogan, “converting the darkness into light.” They were told they were going to save rural families from their own ignorance; many believed firmly in this role. Rather than breaking with Somoza, the Sandinistas continued to view rural life from a deficit perspective that made them blind and deaf to rural families’ and communities’ many strengths, including their resilience, local knowledge and reliance on *convivencia* or living in community and off the land. Years later, these beliefs about rurality continued under Ortega and his rural programs, and persisted in rural schooling and multigrade teachers’ lives. I briefly discuss beliefs about rurality as expressed in the Crusade below.

Converting the darkness into light: Prejudices and stereotypes of rural life. Even though the Sandinistas rightly assumed rural life was different from the urban more intellectual lifestyles and knowledge that influenced the Junta, they had little direct knowledge or understanding of what rural life entailed or why. They used common prejudices and negative stereotypes about rural families and communities to guide policies and programs in rural areas, and made no effort to learn about or take into account rural production experiences or social networks (Fauné, 2014; Cáceres, 2014). The “Sandinista urban and technocratic biases against a peasantry considered to be socially and technologically backward, led FSLN policymakers to implement policies that at best neglected, and in many cases harmed, the interests of the rural population” (Horton, 1998, p. 13). The original leader of rural policies and land redistribution (Jamie Wheelock) was an urban intellectual from an elite Nicaraguan family who believed the urban proletariat would be the engine behind the revolution – not rural farmers and farmworkers. Wheelock ordered small landowners in the north to give up their lands to create large-scale cooperatives managed by the government as part of the national food security plan. Those who refused were immediately labeled traitors to the revolution, their lands confiscated. These actions not only destroyed individual family’s livelihood, they destroyed complex socio-economic relationships and networks rural families had built over generations and relied upon for their survival. But the Sandinistas erroneously understood their policies as correct and righteous, necessary for the common good of the entire country.

The Literacy Crusade's anthem expressed deeply embedded rural prejudices and stereotypes. Carlos Mejia Godoy, an internationally renowned singer/songwriter, wrote the anthem to celebrate and honor the literacy educators who he called "brigade members," "guerrilla fighters" and "Sandino's sons and daughters." Who they were and what they did represented the very best of the revolution. They had volunteered to "liquidate" the "ignorance and error" of older rural and indigenous peoples who had lived off the land for decades and survived Somoza's most virulent repression – in "darkness" and "incivility" (Cermeño, 2011). The entire anthem's words are below:

- 1 Onward, brigade members
- 2 Guerrilla fighters for literacy
- 3 Your machete is the [literacy] workbook
- 4 To liquidate with a single blow
- 5 Ignorance and error.

- 6 Onward, brigade members
- 7 Many centuries of incivility will fall
- 8 Let's raise barricades
- 9 Of notebooks and blackboards
- 10 We're on our way to the cultural insurrection.
- 11 FIST RAISED HIGH! OPEN BOOK!^{xxxvii}

- 12 To the entire country, "Join the National Crusade!"
- 13 We will earn the destiny
- 14 Of being Sandino's sons and daughters
- 15 Converting the darkness into light and clarity.
- 16 FIST RAISED HIGH! OPEN BOOK!⁴⁶

According to the anthem, the Crusaders, as "Sandino's sons and daughters" (line 14) would use literacy workbooks (line 3), notebooks and blackboards (line 9) to carry rural and indigenous people out of their darkness (line 15), ignorance, error (line 5) and "centuries of incivility" (line 7) into the revolution's light (line 15) that the young crusaders would provide during four months of literacy education.

The crippling deficits accrued by farmers were linked directly to their lack of formal schooling. The solution was basic literacy: learning to read and write one's name, revolutionary slogans and basic arithmetic (addition and subtraction, mostly). The

⁴⁶ "Avancemos brigadistas, guerrilleros de la alfabetización. Tu machete es la cartilla para liquidar de un tajo la ignorancia y el error. Avancemos, brigadistas, muchos siglos de incultura caerán, levantemos barricadas de cuadernos y pizarras, vamos a la insurrección cultural. ¡PUNO EN ALTO! ¡LIBRO ABIERTO! Todo el pueblo a la Cruzada Nacional, ganaremos el destino de ser hijos de Sandino convirtiendo la oscuridad en claridad."

Sandinista's design, content and teaching methods reflected deeply-held beliefs about teaching and learning, the role of formal schooling in development, and learners. I look at these beliefs in the following section because Ortega interjected them into teacher responsibilities, mandates and discourse. I explain how Ortega and Murillo revived the Crusade in government policies and programs in an attempt to raise awareness and teacher commitment to their contemporary Human Development Plan. By aligning the popular Literacy Crusade to Ortega's Human Development Plan and projects, Ortega embedded the Sandinista beliefs, actions and outcomes that the Crusade embodied to his current efforts. He used the Crusade to incentivize teachers and high schools students to implement Sandinista programs and projects while inviting them to adopt Sandinista values and a commitment to ongoing societal transformation by following in the footsteps of the Crusade's Brigadistas. For those who embraced Sandinista values, this strategy in values education resonated strongly. Many teachers who did not embrace Sandinista values often rejected the imposition of overtly political party values. Some chose to replace overtly political values with what they perceived as related Christian or patriotic values (see chapter 9). Other teachers (whose political party identity was Liberal or otherwise anti-Orteguista) focused on how their political party beliefs clashed with those the government embedded in values education, and chose not to implement certain actions or actively boycott them due to what they cited as their overly politicized nature (see chapter 9).

The Crusade in contemporary times. The experience gained through the Crusade defined formal schooling under Ortega. Government and elementary teachers' primary academic focus remained fixed on basic literacy with the additional components of community education and teacher consciousness-raising about Ortega's national project. Ortega reincorporated the waterfall of learning into teacher professional development with the nation's 55,000 educators. The waterfall provided information, proceduralized actions and supervision criteria in monthly evaluation and planning PD as well as more punctual PD sessions. All PD included themes related to Ortega's project, like Sandinista values and values enactment through implementation at the community level in the government's social development programs.

The MINED's annual school calendar included commemorations of the Crusade throughout the school year. In 2009, Ortega decreed the Crusade anthem the Education

Hymn of Nicaragua for students to pay homage to the crusaders and their accomplishments each day in school assembly. School principals, rural teachers and urban high school students did an annual illiteracy survey in their respective school communities to help the government plan its national literacy program. High schools initiated a graduation requirement in which students in their final year had to teach adults in their communities to read and write. Ortega revived the waterfall of learning in teacher professional development, providing replications of replications of replications in monthly planning and evaluation workshops (TEPCE) and an unprecedented 32-session PD effort in 2013. And partisan politics seeped into formal education in curricular changes, verbal orientations regarding monthly values education activities, and professional development that educated teachers about government policies and programs – so they would educate families in their school communities.



Photo 4. Sandinista Youth do literacy census, MINED INFORMA.

Contemporary commemorations of the Crusade in and out of schools were usually linked to current literacy campaigns – to involve people in efforts to lower illiteracy once again. These parallel campaigns from the past and present were examples of who Nicaraguans were and what they could become when they worked together for the common good. In 2013, the MINED used the same slogans and phrasing from the Crusade as it sent teachers and students to collect illiteracy data locally, door to door, inviting older Nicaraguans to “eliminate ignorance with one slice” (MINED INFORMA, March 2013). The government then launched a coordinated literacy campaign in all government institutions nationally and in Municipal Town Halls to reduce illiteracy among government workers. They launched a similar campaign among Cabinets of the Family, Community and Life; Sandinista Youth; Councils of Sandinista Leadership; local Literacy Councils; and teachers to “raise consciousness, motivate and help protagonists, youth and adults and Cabinets of the Family to appropriate literacy as a project of the government” (MINED INFORMA, December 2013). Using anti-imperialist and revolutionary rhetoric to inspire youth to join government literacy campaigns, Ortega and government officials regularly “urged [youth] to continue [Sandino’s] legacy in a new era” (MINED INFORMA, February 2013), positioning their

efforts as a contrast to when “education was in the hands of a publicity campaign promoted by imperialism” in which it was “obligatory to learn and repeat on exams that Sandino was a bandit, an assassin, and that Somoza was a hero, that Somoza was a patriot” (MINED INFORMA, February 2013).

Government officials used the dueling historic memories as an effective recruiting tool of youth to incorporate them into Ortega’s national project. The Crusade was a vehicle to remind youth of their responsibility to respond to the challenges of new historic circumstances and to remember how education “[evolved] our way of being, and our way of acting, working with humility, studying, innovating, growing from the complementary nature of being Men and Women” (MINED INFORMA, February, 2013). The young crusaders were a symbol of the potential of Nicaraguan youth and how much the country needed their energy and focus to make Ortega’s project a reality in every community. It reminded people of the power of solidarity, walking with the poor, and education; it was proof of how amazing things happened when those more fortunate united to help less fortunate compatriots. Crusade commemorations – along with others – were an opportunity to remind Nicaragua’s youth that they were capable of responding to the country’s needs and being successful.



Photo 5. Environmental league in a Managua classroom, MINED INFORMA.

Ortega overtly injected partisanship in formal schooling just as the Sandinistas had during the Crusade. “The imposition of Sandinista hegemony is something that disrupts even today,” Fauné (2014, n.p.) wrote in her analysis of the Sandinista revolution in rural areas. School principals as Sandinista spokespeople enforced partisan

imagery and activities in schools that often divided teachers who held different political beliefs (see Photo 5,

FSLN/Sandinista flag in classroom). Overt political objectives of monthly values education activities and campaigns divided adults in and out of schools. Politicization often meant full compliance and implementation of orientations received from supervisors through the waterfall of governance – no matter their effects in the school or community, or if they took time away from classroom teaching and student academic learning. Politicization meant

having to work with Sandinista Youth and adult leaders with education subsumed under a political agenda, with a discourse in which “they say they are for the entire community” but “have a selective and exclusionary origin” (Prado, 2013, n.p.). In an increasingly polarized environment, each political party positioned itself firmly as good versus bad (the other parties), moral versus immoral, values versus anti-values. The increasingly partisan nature of school activities and leadership positions (teachers and parents) carried these same moral positionings. In 2012 and 2013, many teachers decried and denounced “politicization” creeping into their schools and classrooms, including teachers with whom I worked. They were required to post government slogans in every classroom and posters of Ortega and Murillo in visible spaces, coordinate with local Sandinista leadership, implement values activities linked to Sandinista heroes and events, and help implement government projects outside of school. Like the crusaders, teachers under Ortega were expected to acquire an expanded political objective of community organization and social cohesion around his national project through different projects and campaigns each month. The Crusade’s content, methods and discourse showcased beliefs about teaching and learning that continued in Ortega’s MINED. Teaching was a fairly straightforward procedure that required motivation to be successful. Experts or those more knowledgeable transmitted information to those less knowledgeable, verbally or in writing. The “waterfall of learning” was effective in transmitting information from a small group of people to a much larger group in succession and over a short period of time. If one was not an expert and still had to teach, one only needed materials with the correct information to transmit. Content as represented in curricular materials were a vital part of teaching and learning – more than pedagogy, knowledge of learners or classroom management and motivation. The Crusade’s success was based on thrice-replicated trainings in which recently trained trainers taught youth in ten days how and what to teach rural adults. Uniform content was vital to make learning a success: everyone learned the same content in the same amount of time in the same manner. The Crusade has a national, Spanish-language curriculum as did Ortega’s MINED. Student learning was each student’s responsibility making teacher knowledge of student needs, background knowledge or motivation irrelevant. For the Crusade, learning remained an unknown, unreported and unmeasured; in the MINED, it focused on ensuring a passing grade for most students at any cost, including inflating grades to increase pass rates. Teacher

learning included knowing how to use information learned even if that was not explicitly taught. Teaching and learning were based primarily on motivation: the crusaders were not teachers but they learned how to do it because they were motivated. A lack of educational resources and time were not indicative of whether teaching or learning could happen; the crusaders worked with little more than their motivation and were hugely successful.

In addition to motivation, which people generally believed an individual controlled and a teacher could not influence much, the other main component to teaching and learning was the teacher program or curriculum. It was likened to being a machete in the Crusade anthem (line 3) and by Ortega government officials and teachers. It had all the information a teacher or teacher trainer needed to do their job, as shown through the waterfall of learning and in all formal schooling. The Crusaders did not need to be teachers, or know about the lives, knowledge, beliefs or ways of living and knowing of their students. In academic learning, several teachers explained to me, students were a clean slate and the curriculum provided the necessary content to give them. Teachers only needed to follow official planning and instructional procedures to give the content as prescribed.

Teachers clarified that these beliefs applied to academic learning in classrooms (e.g., literacy knowledge and skills). Beliefs about teaching and learning values coincided more with how the Crusade approached teaching and learning of revolutionary values: through experience, socially with others, by putting values into practice together. This distinction or separation of how academic content and skills should be taught and learned in comparison to values impacted how the government chose to implement values education in schools as a highly controlled set of activities designed and communicated by government officials monthly through verbal mandates announced by local MINED school nucleus leaders.

These beliefs about rurality, teaching, learning and schooling permeated Ortega's government. Most of the MINED's policies, national curriculum, pedagogy and professional development reflected an entrenched deficit view of rural life. Ortega used negative stereotypes about rural life to inform education policies and programs, similar to how they had informed the Crusade's design and implementation. Despite those beliefs eventually contributing to the revolution's downfall, Ortega did not change it. He also embraced three complementary qualities in his governance that entrenched those beliefs even further: *caudillismo*, contrarianism and loyalty. I explain each of these as well as some challenges

and contradictions they created that Municipal MINED officials, school principals, teachers, community leaders and residents had to accommodate, moderate and mediate in their daily lives and work.

Caudillismo, Contrarianism and Loyalty

In this section, I describe the following three qualities of Ortega's governance:

- 1) *Caudillismo*: Personality politics and strong-man tactics in top-down governance
- 2) *Contrarianism*: Policies and programs that distinguish one government from another
- 3) *Loyalty*: Devotion, dependability and fidelity required of all public servants

Each reinforced the other. Each also had deep historical roots that Ortega expanded upon. Teachers cited these three areas as working together to create the power of the waterfall, its messaging and supervision. Sandinista-identified teachers tended to view this dynamic positively, while those not identified as such, or who were actively anti-Ortega, tended to view this governance negatively. Some cited how these three qualities worked together to shut them out of opportunities for advancement, promoted cadre with little to no experience in the classroom who could thus not provide the pedagogic attention they needed and desired, or maintained a punitive environment that squashed discussion and questioning of mandates or orientations while embracing unquestioned fidelity to those above them. All agreed that these three qualities affected teachers in their daily practice and professional development.

Caudillismo. As the last caudillo in Nicaragua, opposition figures and regular citizens often described Ortega as an autocrat or dictator, ““with a little more elegance, maybe, but a dictatorship nonetheless”” (Anderson, 2014). Ortega's government demonstrated several common characteristics of *caudillismo*, including “centralization, personalism, verticalism, oppression, corruption, patron-client bonds, and the willingness to resort to extra-legal practices” (Deonandan, 2008, p. 45). With political and socio-economic power in the hands of one person, *caudillismo* “limits citizen participation to elections, entrenches elite interests, and excludes the consideration of serious reform from the political agenda” (Close, 2008, p. 6). *Neo-caudillos* of the new millennium like Ortega manipulated government structures and legal processes through pacts and other political forms of corruption. They used traditional caudillo methods of control like outright repression,

militarism and violence against opposition groups and threats against those they perceived had questioned their actions, motives or legitimacy.

Ortega's government carefully constructed a personality cult around "Daniel" (e.g., the slogan "Daniel=Good Government") to gain broad support. Ortega was larger than life physically and figuratively, a survivor and fighter from the 1970s and the only president for many people who helped impoverished Nicaraguans (outside the Sandinista revolution). People regularly mentioned Daniel or Murillo⁴⁷ in daily conversation as if they knew them personally, responding to "the personality cult around Ortega in songs, discourse, spots and television ads"⁴⁸ Equipo Envío, August 2014, n.p.). Many people agreed that "here the man in charge is Daniel Ortega, he is the accommodating man, the man who knows change, the man who dismantles strikes, the man who suppresses electricity blackouts...With that man we can get things done!" (Equipo Envío, August 2014, n.p.).

Government controlled media, officials and community leaders profusely thanked "Daniel" for every school built, every drinking water and electricity project christened, and every handout – from the 14 sheets of tin roofing, the stove and other kitchen supplies, and the small animal projects of several chickens and two pigs^{xxxviii}. The cult around Daniel was so strong that "when the government gives a loan to someone, many people think that the functionary or the President took that money out of his pocket and is doing them a favor and they feel they have an obligation to thank him" (Cáceres, 2014, n.p.). The leader of the only cooperative federation that allowed members from any political party into its organization (all others were segregated by political party membership) raised concerns about the cult personality in politics and a general lack of knowledge that "the government has the responsibility to use [its] resources well, that they are everyone's" and how "that kind of consciousness does not exist among people [or] public servants" (Cáceres, 2014).

Even more than Augusto Sandino, Ortega's image was everywhere. One-by-three-story posters in major intersections of every city overwhelmed public spaces. Public servants posted flyers in every school, clinic and government office building while ordinary citizens

⁴⁷ Also called by her first name of "Rosario" or "La Chayo," the latter being short for Rosario, and several derogatory terms I do not use in this study.

⁴⁸ Sobreabundó tanto el culto a la personalidad de Ortega en canciones, discursos, spots y tomas televisivas, como el sectarismo, que desde hace años ha convertido una efemérides que debería ser nacional, en una fiesta cada vez más partidaria, sectaria, sólo dedicada a un sector de la población.

and local leaders posted them on houses, abandoned buildings, bus stops, posts and any blank wall space they could find. People wore Daniel t-shirts and baseball caps that were given away at public events. The Party changed the words of popular revolutionary songs from Latin American artists to celebrate Daniel and his accomplishments. The altered songs repeated over and over at public events and on government-controlled radio stations, while the original revolutionary⁴⁹ songs were silenced. Daniel had reinvented himself many times since the 1970s and his current self was “more acceptable and calm” (Seisdedos & Blazquez Vilaplana, 2007, p. 36) than the revolutionary firebrand of the past; the most current version was “the sweetened image of father, loving spouse, conciliatory leader, religious man” (p. 36). For some analysts, caudillos like Daniel were “incubated by society” and “anti-values of the political culture” that embraced personality politics, sectarianism, and “a magic sense of life that makes them believe that from one moment to the next a redeemer will get us out of poverty” (Equipo Envio, August 2014, n.p.). Years of broken promises and almost half the population living in severe poverty left many voters to “search for a political leader, a savior, who will help them get out of their daily life situation, a save-the-homeland [leader]” (Seisdedos & Blazquez Vilaplana, 2007, p. 22). Daniel positioned himself to be that leader.

While First Lady Murillo was instrumental in re-creating Ortega’s image as kind, compassionate and generous among his followers and the greater population, she showed a personal willingness to use sledge-hammer politics, particularly among wayward loyalists. Like traditional *caudillos*, Ortega used coercion and imposition in governance to meet his objectives. Murillo meted out threats and punishments. She was Ortega’s campaign and marketing manager, Secretary of Communications for Ortega and the Sandinista Party, the head of the government Council of Communications and Citizenry, the president’s private secretary, presidential Chief of Staff, and Master of Ceremonies at all of Ortega’s commemorations and events. She was said to be in charge of all Sandinista Party posts at all levels, including Mayors and community Cabinet positions. She spoke to the nation each day and publicly aired grievances against loyalists along the waterfall who appeared to either question or not follow the First Couple’s orientations or positions. Ortega underscored her influence when he commented that “he had given [her] fifty percent of power” (Enriquez, 2013). Opposition figures were more pointed saying the government’s projects and

⁴⁹ Canto popular

campaigns did not have an ideological foundation or revolutionary basis, but were “instead Murillo’s project of political power” (Equipo Envío, March 2013). Her tactics included public humiliation, fictitious charges of corruption that were dropped after a leader was successfully removed, and abrupt removal of Mayors and Congressional representatives from their political posts or candidacies. When local activists and leaders complained, she either ignored them or launched attacks against them as well. Her unique wielding of power combined with Ortega’s overall governance of imposition facilitated through the waterfall attracted strong critiques:

When from the summit of the current political regime exclusion is sown as a form of living in community,⁵⁰ when through prizes and punishments they seek to cut off freedoms and vanquish willpower in exchange for privilege, it is also a good moment to review what has happened, to reinvent ourselves.⁵¹ (Prado, 2013)

The threats, punishments and powerful waterfall closed spaces for autonomy by most public servants, even the most powerful Ministers of government agencies (Cáceres, 2014).

Ortega and many Sandinistas believed the punitive environment was necessary to root out and silence potential opposition to protect the massive government project while it was still vulnerable from outside interference. Derailment of revolutionary projects was not a hypothetical concern; it had been a U.S. pastime in Nicaragua with Nicaragua’s traditional elite. Together, they had systematically disrupted, impeded and aborted past resistance struggles – most recently the Sandinista revolution – through propaganda campaigns and repression, magnified by U.S. funding. The country’s overwhelmingly negative experiences with *Yanqui* imperialism contributed to Ortega’s passion – and constant justification – for consolidating power in every level of government and the Sandinista Party. The imperative to protect his National Plan relied upon silencing opposition while imposing strict procedures for implementing its programs and campaigns uniformly and simultaneously – methods that segued seamlessly with *caudillismo*.

Over the years, Ortega had honed his skills as a masterful negotiator of pacts, leading his former vice-president and others to declare, “Ortega outsmarted us all” (Anderson, p. 54).

⁵⁰ *convivencia*

⁵¹ Cuando desde la cumbre del actual régimen político se pretende sembrar la exclusión como forma de convivencia, cuando mediante premios y castigos se busca recortar las libertades y doblar las voluntades a cambio de prebendas, es también buen momento para revisar lo hecho, para reinventarnos. Ya no podemos seguir haciendo más de lo mismo.

Pacts in Nicaragua were “a deal between the government, elected or not, and its most important opponents to allot ‘quotas of power’” (Close, 2008, p. 11). In 2000, the leaders of the two most important political parties were Ortega and then-President Arnoldo Aleman, both of whom were threatened by considerable legal scrutiny for allegations of incest and personal enrichment using public funds, respectively.^{xxxix} The two *caudillos* negotiated a historic, super-secret pact referred to simply as “The Pact”⁵² which ensured a “duopoly” (Close, 2008) between their two political parties and immunity. In a complete circumvention of government processes, they divided up government jobs, electoral offices, and Supreme Court judges while making changes in electoral laws and the Constitution that severely curtailed small political party participation. The agreements would later serve to re-elect Ortega to the presidency the next decade with only 38% of the popular vote, something he could never have done without The Pact. The two leaders “[restricted] pluralism, with the excuse of generating stability” (Puig, 2010, p. 91), and decomposed fledgling democratic institutions regarding governing transparency, accountability, citizen participation and overall checks and balances that the Sandinista revolution had begun (Hoyt, 2004). Despite blanket immunity, Ortega outsmarted Aleman over the following years to “grow his minority Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) into a dominating, one-party system” (Rogers, December 2012, n.p.). In 2016, the Ortega-controlled Electoral Commission declared Aleman’s fledgling Liberal Party illegal due to a technicality. Ortega’s image as an all-powerful caudillo continued to grow.

By 2010 and just three years after returning to the presidency, Ortega controlled all four branches of government: the Supreme Court, National Assembly, Presidency and Electoral Commission. He continued to consolidate his power vertically at state and municipal (Town Hall/Mayors) levels. In the two municipal elections held since taking office, Sandinista Mayors won 105 of 153 municipalities in 2008, and then 134 of 153 municipalities in 2012. Though Liberal Party leaders joined with international groups in 2012 with documentation of fraud in 70 municipalities (Transparency International), the Ortega-controlled Electoral Commission upheld the results. Sandinistas controlled almost 90% (87.6) of the country’s Town Halls (mayors and city councils).

⁵² El Pacto

Ortega also consolidated his power at local levels through community Cabinets, Sandinista Youth groups and schools. In 2013, the Sandinista-controlled Assembly legalized Murillo's Cabinets of the Family, Community and Life in every rural community and urban neighborhood. These were based on the Sandinista Defense Committees of the 1980s which "coordinated neighborhood clean-up campaigns, distributed food, provided shelter to the homeless, and distributed identity documents" (Bay-Meyer, 2013) – and provided vigilance over their neighbors. The newly revised Cabinets identified local beneficiaries for social services and government programs including emergency foodstuffs, small livestock, fertilizer, low-interest loans for women, community water and electricity projects, and university scholarships. Cabinet members coordinated school programs with their school principal and teachers. Members of five Sandinista Youth groups channeled youth into organized activities related to sports, environmental protection, radio and communication, leadership, and arts/culture – all with a political education component and a voice in choosing beneficiaries with Cabinet members. Sandinista Youth also coordinated with teachers as per government orientations. Some Nicaraguans characterized the community Cabinets and Sandinista Youth as Ortega's "currents of transmission" because members made critical decisions at the local level as cited above. They also approved or denied community member solicitations for government-related jobs, participation in technical-vocational training programs and reduced-cost medicine programs.

Some opposition figures and citizens criticized Ortega for not strengthening "governability of the Nicaraguan political system, but rather the maintenance of power quotas" (Seisdedos & Blazquez Vilaplana, 2007, p. 5), but this was a historical tendency not unique to Ortega. Ortega continued to increase societal polarization and led the country towards "a new civil confrontation between two sectors of the Nicaraguan population; Sandinistas and opposition" (p. 6). He imposed his project, values, beliefs and actions from above while declaring the importance of grassroots organization and protagonism, with "initiatives from the community, internal initiatives, are the least [common]. The most frequent is organizations created from the outside"⁵³ (Prado, 2013). Ortega's model was imposed from above by loyal Sandinistas to ensure the success of their transformational

⁵³ Pero los casos de iniciativas propias de la comunidad, iniciativas internas, son los menos. Lo más frecuente es que las organizaciones se crearon desde fuera.

project towards 21st century socialism – “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity.” It was a hierarchical vanguard form of governance similar to the Sandinista revolution in which “all was imposition...a militarist and authoritarian vision” (Fauné, 2014) combined with fears of interference from the U.S. to justify contrarianism in Ortega governance.

Contrarianism. Ortega was a caudillo and staunch contrarianist, governing through a tendency “of a new administration to separate themselves fully from their predecessor, and thus dismantle (not just neglect) old policies” (Corrales, 2006, p. 460). Ortega discarded all policies, programs and pilot projects of his predecessors to make a complete break as a prerequisite to creating the conditions to achieve a promised better future. Nicaragua’s “ideologically polarized party system” (Corrales, 2006, p. 460) made contrarianism especially acute. The same had happened at the end of the Sandinista Revolution when the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded a \$12.2 million operation during which all Sandinista education materials were shredded and replaced. A USAID official remarked, “In the history of the Agency, I think it was the first time that in the span of ten months we totally replaced textbooks for all the schools in a country” (Arnové, 1995, p. 34). The incoming government and the U.S. categorically rejected everything Sandinista. There was no contemplation of continuity or possible negative effects of developing the education system from scratch. Instead, it was deemed an ideological necessity.

Political contrarianism combined with “bureaucratic dysfunctionism” or “the failure of state officials to meet their administrative obligations” (Corrales, 2006, p. 460). Nicaragua’s governments regularly formulated policies based on ideology without assigning the budgetary investments needed to implement them. Somoza and Ortega invested half of the minimum 7% of GDP agreed upon in the United Nations. Their investments were woefully insufficient to build enough schools to provide universal primary school access, print ample curricular resources, ensure teacher capacity (preparation and development), and guarantee dignified teaching-learning conditions. They developed National Plans with enormous promises and inspiring slogans – “Nicaragua, rise up and walk” (Alemán), “God and the best government in history” (Bolaños), “National Reconciliation and Unity” (Ortega) – without the budget to fully implement them.

Dysfunctionalism included another acute form of contrarianism: each ensuing government fired *all* national, state and municipal agency staff and replaced them with their own political party loyalists. These purges took several months or more and conclusively erased historical and technical knowledge of a previous government's policies, programs and tools. Each government justified staff overhauls as ideologically necessary and essential to successfully implement their new project with no opposition. Extensive overhauls also opened tens of thousands of jobs to political party supporters immediately following elections – consolidating support for the party in power. With few formal jobs, the possibility of secure employment was a strong incentive for some people to work for and pledge allegiance to a particular caudillo or political party – and then request a job in return once the new government was installed. When Ortega extended this tradition to school principals, he opened the door for many teachers to climb a career ladder without necessarily having a background in administration.^{xl}

Historically, contrarianism in Nicaragua like *caudillismo* was related almost solely to personal power and wealth,^{xli} and not ideological differences. The Sandinista Revolution infused an ideological component by framing its ideological differences as diametrically opposed to the Somoza dictatorship (i.e., capitalism/imperialism versus socialism). When based on ideological differences, each incoming government politicized and polarized Nicaraguan society further by justifying their existence and methods as antithetical to the previous government's beliefs, discourse, policies and actions. According to Ortega, for example, his project was good, blessed and acting on values while neoliberal and imperialist policies were destructive, immoral and based on anti-values. This ideologically divisive discourse created rifts in social cohesion as only those who supported one ideology were good, blessed and acting on values.

Neoliberal governments presented similar contrasts with the added quality that their policies placed disproportionate suffering on the country's poor. Under the supervision of U.S., Europe and multilateral agencies, Nicaragua's neoliberal governments identified themselves as anti-Sandinista and proposed tough austerity measures to combat social excesses. In response, unemployment rose to 20% by 1993 (from 8% in 1989). Combined with underemployment it "effectively prevented over half of the workforce from being able to support itself, even marginally" (Morris, 2010, p. 173). Wages fell. Half the population

lived in poverty on less than \$428.94 each year while an additional 20% lived in extreme, life-threatening poverty. Approximately one third of children under five years old became malnourished.

Owing to the fees instituted for health care – another “austerity” initiative – medical consultations declined 21 percent between 1990 and 1994, and public health deteriorated. Because fees were also instituted for public schools – a bizarre condition the International Monetary Fund typically placed on loan recipients – school attendance declined and illiteracy rates rose...Nicaragua emerged as a country with one of the most unequal income distributions in the world. (Morris, 2010, p. 173)

Twelve years into the neo-liberal experiment, Nicaragua had dropped from its rank of 60 in 1990 on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) to 118 in 2002 (of 175 countries total). In 2004, per capita income was lower than before the 1979 revolution. Imports surpassed exports by 30%. By 2006, 40% of children’s deaths were related to malnutrition, and 25% of children under 5 years old were physically or mentally retarded (UNICEF), leading to predictions that Nicaragua would not meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) regarding nutrition (Muhr, 2008). By 2007, Nicaragua had one of the largest income inequality gaps in the world. Despite these wretched results for the majority of Nicaraguans, neoliberal governments hailed their policies as a successful example of capitalism winning over socialism and international support helping Nicaragua’s economy recover. Ortega presented himself as a completely different leader with a different vision, skills and national project that would focus on the poor and most disaffected rather than ignore and marginalize them.

Ortega personalized this feat and painted himself as a powerful caudillo who could stand up to the U.S. and multilateral agencies and make the structural changes necessary to get Nicaragua back on its feet. He would guide the country through its crisis and worked towards equality and justice. Success required loyalty to his vision, and loyalty was a central feature of Ortega’s style and methods. Though he could not demand loyalty from every teacher, he could from every principal and local leader who coordinated with teachers and community residents.

Loyalty. Ortega demanded loyalty to his person, ideology, future vision and steps to get there. His personality politics moved many Sandinistas to coin the phrases *Orteguismo*

and *Orteguistas* to describe Ortega's new millennial government and his staunchest loyalists, respectively. Loyalty was most commonly measured by full compliance with what Ortega and his top leaders ordered – in actions and discourse. This was only one facet of *Orteguista* loyalty which intimated a deep commitment or allegiance to Ortega and his project. Loyalty meant adopting and using specific ways of thinking, believing, knowing, communicating, acting and interacting. Loyalists were patriots who believed fervently in their country and compatriots, in values of solidarity and walking with the poor, in protecting the environment and each other – as ensuring national and individual sovereignty, disaster mitigation, community health prevention, and more. This comprehensive loyalty involved being part of government efforts to actively help people “transform our culture of daily life” by “placing indispensable coherency between who we are, what we think and what we do”⁵⁴ (Murillo, 2013). Individual changes towards coherency occurred by taking action with others for the common good, to create change on a scale much larger than oneself while actively fighting against anti-values such as imperialism, greed, violence and apathy. One's engagement in this process and demonstrations of one's actions, interactions and discourse served to demonstrate one's loyalty – and trustworthiness.

Loyalty was measured by other loyalists along the waterfall as well as by ordinary citizens. Ortega and Murillo encouraged all people to denounce mid-level leaders and public servants who did not comply with the government's policies, programs and campaigns because their incomppliance showed disloyalty to the Nicaraguan people. Officials framed this constant surveillance as positive and part of the Shared Responsibility Model: everyone had to do their part and when someone did not it affected everyone else. This constant scrutiny checked against infidelity of mid-level leaders and community-based implementers, including teachers. It ensured loyalty even at the most superficial level of forced compliance with the caveat that over time working together – even if forced in the beginning – would be transformative.

This enormous emphasis on loyalty grew in part from the Sandinista Party's roots as a political-military organization with a vanguard enshrouded in secrecy to protect its members at all levels of its hierarchical organization^{xlii} (Puig, 2010). During its tenure, the

⁵⁴ Nos invitamos, nos convocamos, a trabajar junt@s, a aprender junt@s, nicaragüenses de todas las generaciones, para transformar nuestra Cultura de la Vida Cotidiana, poniendo los énfasis indispensables en la coherencia entre lo que somos, lo que pensamos, y lo que hacemos.

revolutionary Junta built a citizen party base that overlapped and blended party and government structure and functioning into one – a form of governance Ortega reenacted. He envisioned a homogeneous country of loyal Sandinistas who embraced his National Plan to make sure no community or family faced poverty or hunger again. A problem with this vision is it left no space for those who did not share it or shared a different path to get there. The strength of the caudillo combined with the values-laden contrarianist vision which justified loyalists who professed the same vision and beliefs created a blind allegiance to what I termed homogenous nearsightedness regarding Ortega's National Plan, the steps to make it a reality, and the population with which it was implemented.

Homogeneous Nearsightedness

The National Literacy Crusade was one example of the Sandinista's homogeneous governance "mindset" in which it offered a series of one-size-fits-all programs that were to be implemented uniformly in all communities. There was no need for discussion or adaptations. National leaders overlooked regional diversity. A community's unique needs and resources, or ways of living and communicating, were not taken into account. As mentioned previously, any questioning was immediately labeled dissent or opposition and had to be quashed, or the dissenter no longer allowed to participate in or benefit from the project. This homogeneous nearsightedness contributed to a continued marginalization of rural and indigenous populations under Ortega and polarization of Nicaraguan society. The strict boundaries set regarding participation in and benefits from the government moved people to experiment with different forms of compliance and dissent. I provide a brief historical description of homogeneous nearsightedness in governance below.

Everyone is Spanish-speaking and from the Southern Pacific Coast. Nicaraguans shared a belief that they were one homogeneous people. Fauné (2014) wrote that most Spanish-speaking Nicaraguans did not really see the complete Nicaragua "even though we have seen the map of Nicaragua a thousand times...[and] it is not an empty territory, it has an identity, a history, it has life and movement"⁵⁵ (n.p.). Nicaragua's politicians and international agencies focused on Nicaragua's extensive poverty as if every impoverished community and family faced the same needs and challenges; to policy makers and officials,

⁵⁵ Aunque hemos visto mil veces el mapa de Nicaragua...[and] no es un territorio vacío, tiene una identidad, una historia, tiene vida y movimiento.

poverty was a homogenous existence. They tended to focus on Nicaragua's monolingual Spanish-speaking citizenry whose majority lived in a southwestern Pacific triangle between Leon, Granada and Managua – the three oldest and most populated cities founded under Spanish colonial rule and from which most of Nicaragua's political elite hailed.

Homogenous nearsightedness had historical roots in its focus on the 75-mile long triangle of Pacific southwestern cities and blindness to compatriots in the north and east. From their inception, the Liberal Party's base was León while the Conservative base was Granada; each had socio-economic activities distinct from each other though similar in their export orientation. Managua was founded as the nation's political capital to bridge the two colonial cities. More than a century of civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives obscured the rest of the country from their leaders' concerns. The central-northern mountains had mines and coffee growing lands that large landowners developed and protected with their own private armies. Smaller landowners grew coffee, vegetables and fruit with day laborers with whom they developed unique patron-client relationships in isolated rural communities. The region was relatively self-sustaining, physically and culturally removed from the Pacific southwest. The Atlantic Coast – comprising 56.2% of the country's geography and 10% of the population – was even more physically, culturally, linguistically, religiously, politically and economically separate from the rest of the country. Divided by rivers and swampland from the Spanish-speaking west, it was never colonized by the Spaniards. Instead, its indigenous tribes and afro-descendant Creole communities lived under the reign of the British crown until 1860 and then at the whim of U.S. companies until 1987 (Equipo Envío, 1981). They maintained their own languages and gained the designation as an autonomous region in 1987 during the Sandinista revolution.

Governance through a mindset of homogenous nearsightedness created one-size-fits-all programs and campaigns that loyalists and public servants implemented uniformly and in unison in every community through a waterfall of orders and supervision. Nicaraguans who did not fit the Sandinista mold were responsible for adapting their actions, ways of thinking, beliefs and values to the Sandinista current of societal transformation. Any other alternative would not work. Within this mindset, public servants in charge of implementing government programs were not authorized to adapt their methods, discourse or activities to family and community resources, needs or aspirations. Any adaptations could be seen by immediate

supervisors as opposition to be corrected or treason against the entire population. This left many public servants to negotiate between orders based on homogenous nearsightedness and the diversity of people and potential that they knew and lived in their respective regions. Public servants who were born and raised in marginalized communities – and who now worked in marginalized communities for the government – had to decide when, how and with whom they would translate government orders. Some chose full compliance while others wrestled with ways to adapt programs and campaigns to conditions in their local communities. Decisions were based on a multitude of factors, not the least of which was how they complied or dissented related to intended results and propagation of unintended outcomes.

Nicaragua's greatest resource: Its people. President Ortega and many Sandinistas often declared that Nicaragua's greatest resource was its people. During professional development on Ortega's health policies and projects, the Health Minister told teachers and radio listeners that she was convinced that Nicaraguan society would be transformed for the better "with the contribution and accompaniment of everyone. We can take a transcendental step"⁵⁶ forward. "Nicaragua is poor," she said. "It does not have economic resources, but it is rich in its people's desire to work, to work together, to do many things."⁵⁷ If six million Nicaraguans organized and struggled together in one united front for change, they could change their status as one of the poorest countries in Latin America (UNESCO, 2014). The country's 78,222 square miles of lush tropical countryside offered many resources, but its youth held the most promise. Those under 24 years old were more than half the population in 2010. The mix of Spanish, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples spoke a half-dozen languages and practiced many religions. Geographical regions separated by mountains, swamps, forests and enormous freshwater lakes helped people maintain regional identities and customs.

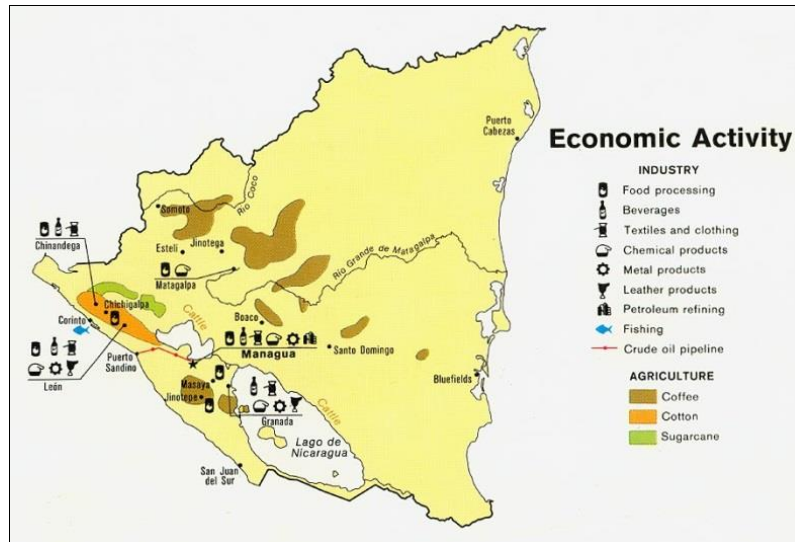
⁵⁶ Eso podemos lograr con el aporte y acompañamiento de todos. Podemos tener un paso trascendental.

⁵⁷ Nicaragua es pobre. No tiene los recursos económicos pero si tiene una riqueza grande, el deseo de su gente de trabajar, trabajar juntos, hacer muchas cosas.

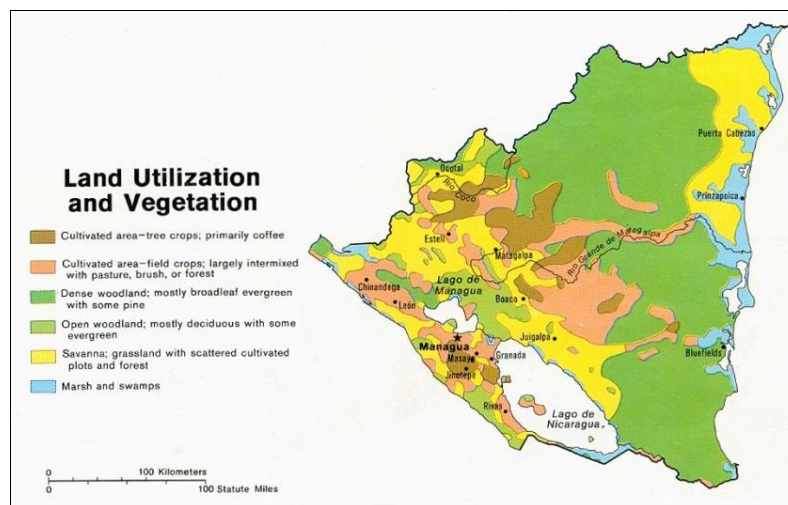


Map 1. Nicaragua's physical location on the Central American isthmus, World Atlas.

Rural landscapes included an impressive biodiversity of plants and animals. Nicaraguan farmers grew much of the corn, beans, fruit, rice, vegetables, cattle and pork consumed nationally with surplus exported to neighboring countries, Venezuela and the U.S. (see map 2 and 3 below). Thirty volcanoes stretched from the central interior mountains to the Pacific coast. Over 500 miles of coast line including the Atlantic coastal plains of the Miskitu, Sumu and Rama Indians, sustained important shrimp, fishing and tourist industries. Being the largest country in Central America with more land and resources than its more prosperous neighbors, many visitors and Nicaraguans asked, “Why does Nicaragua remain so poor?” Answers varied depending on who was in the conversation and whose knowledge and beliefs were emphasized or drawn upon.



Map 2. Nicaragua's economic activity, University of Texas.

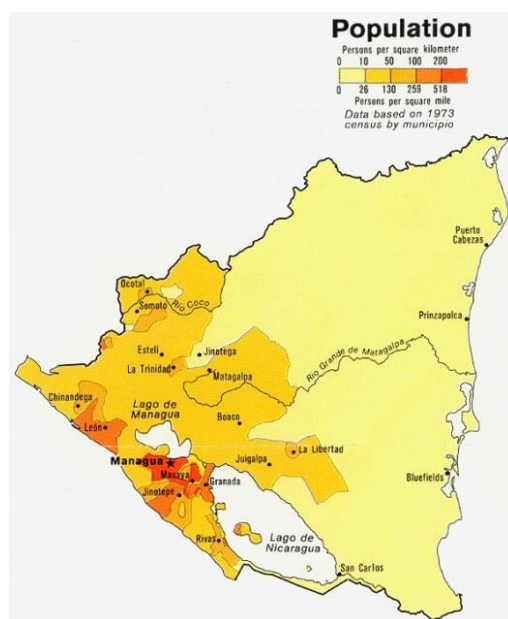


Map 3. Nicaragua's Land Utilization and Vegetation, University of Texas

Commonly used international social and economic development indicators provided a snapshot that reflected a majority of Nicaraguans living in impoverished conditions despite tremendous natural resources and potential. In 2008, approximately one in two young people (50%) lived in poverty, with almost one in five (19%) living in extreme poverty (UNICEF, 2013) – the majority living in the central-northern rural mountains and Atlantic Coast. In 2010, almost one in five (18.9%) of Nicaragua's children from 5 to 13 years old worked.

Almost one in six (14.1%) from 14 to 17 years worked with over 50% not attending high school. In 2009, the Nicaraguan government estimated that 5,000 children and adolescents were living on the street (UNICEF, 2013). Almost one in ten babies born in poverty were underweight (7% of babies in rural areas), while chronic malnutrition in poor families was six times higher than their wealthier counterparts (UNICEF, UNESCO, the Nicaraguan government and the World Bank). In rural areas, chronic malnutrition was more than two times higher than in urban areas.

Though cell phones had become commonplace in most areas by 2012,^{xliii} most Nicaraguans continued to rely primarily on oral, face-to-face communication and interactions, and local radio. Managua, the country's capital, remained the one main urban metropolis in the entire country, an urban sprawl that took between 1.5 and 2 hours to cross on mostly unnamed streets. By 2012, slightly less than half the population lived in Managua and smaller urban areas around the country. Many urban neighborhoods and most rural areas suffered from inadequate transportation and service infrastructure with dirt roads commonplace. Burgeoning communities on each city's outskirts typically lacked running water and electricity. Violence was increasing in urban and rural areas. Heavily armed motorcycle police units were introduced to more cities each year to work alongside neighborhood police that people dismissed as ineffective against the tide of youth group-incited violence.



Map 4. Nicaragua's population, University of Texas

Despite high levels of urban and rural poverty, it was difficult to make generalizations across these communities. The generalized demographic of “impoverished” homogenized an incredibly diverse population of rural and urban poor. Rural communities in north-central Nicaragua, for example, ranged from small hamlets in extremely isolated regions with no basic services to larger *cantones* of a grouping of communities, to semi-rural/semi-urban peripheries of urban centers – and everything in between. Mobility among communities was common as people moved to find temporary work, or to live temporarily with a family member. Multigenerational housing supported families through economic hardships; they shared one roof and survived on everyone’s joint efforts. Multigenerational housing also streamlined children’s care when parents moved temporarily to work in Costa Rica, Spain or the U.S.^{xliv}

The increased economic capacity of rural families supported by remittances from their relatives working in the exterior created a middle class in Nicaragua (and across Central America) that crossed traditional geographic boundaries. It also created families who had direct and vicarious experience with other cultural ways of doing things – different approaches, methods, expectations and technology used in work and education, different kinds of relationships and ways of communicating in parenting and intimacy, for example. Nicaraguans who traveled outside their country to work often imported these different ways

of thinking and doing back to their rural families and communities. This fusion of changing socio-economic and cultural factors challenged homogeneous labels and even identities of “rural” or “urban.” The rigid institutional definitions of “rural” and “urban” could never capture – and thus misrepresented – the complexity of individual, family and community needs, challenges, resources and aspirations within a shared geographical region.

The country’s mix of regionalities, races, languages, ages, gender roles, and economic opportunities created a nation of people who faced a changing jumble of traditional and non-traditional roles, expectations, socio-economic and political possibilities, and future aspirations. The fact that the majority of the Nicaraguan population was 24 years old or younger created additional challenges and advantages for Nicaragua’s socio-economic development. Achieving the Ortega government’s aspiration of equity and justice through citizen participation and redistribution of resources among this heterogeneous population was a challenging goal, complicated by institutional beliefs that diversity could be ignored or overlooked.

When one-size-did-not-fit-all: Conflicting understandings catalyze resistance. An historic example of how governance based on homogenous nearsightedness created contradictions that led to resistance occurred in the central and northern mountains under the Sandinista Junta. The Sandinistas faced a food security crisis after Somoza fled and in response they created the “People’s Property”⁵⁸ to ensure state-controlled agricultural production (Fauné, 2014). The government’s land transfers, financing and technical assistance was provided almost exclusively to Sandinista-organized cooperative and associative forms of production (Cáceres, 2014). These were based primarily on the agro-industrial, chemically-intensive model of cotton production that operated in the southern Pacific coast. Cotton required a permanent and qualified labor force (Fauné, 2014) in contrast to family-owned, small-scale coffee, vegetable, fruit and cattle production in the central and northern mountains. To the Sandinistas, the large cooperative model was effective; it also aligned with their ideology.

Rural families in the northern mountains knew nothing of large-scale cooperatives. Some had sacrificed for generations to clear the tropical forests and develop their small plots of land. Many began as landless workers, then “renters” of land and some became small

⁵⁸ Área Propiedad del Pueblo

landowners (Fauné, 2014). Some continued as landless workers nurturing a common dream of obtaining their own plot of land in the future with the help of their patron or boss. Rural mountain identity included a dedication to hard work and perseverance, to surviving together during the roughest times and sharing during times of plenty. Small landowners and workers alike woke up before the sunrise to work together from sunrise to sunset. They often ate together, joked together, and worried together when crops or animals were suffering. Interdependency and living in community were integral to everyone's survival due to their relative isolation from the rest of the nation; there were few roads and no government health clinics, pharmacies or schools. Though economically unequal, cooperation overruled competition in rural areas.

From pre-capitalist times, northern farmers had survived on *patrón*-worker relationships that were based on protracted and personal ties of reciprocal rights and responsibilities (Horton, 1998). Though typically unequal and hierarchical, *patrón*-worker relationships served economic and social needs of the population. *El patrón* provided small plots of land to his landless workers for their basic sustenance. Those with a little more supported those with much less, including essential commodities in times of scarcity or health care during illness. These complex bonds continued across generations and “were cemented by an elaborate ideological foundation based on kinship, dependence, and shared value systems” (Horton, 1998, p. 55). Since there was nothing similar in the Pacific Southwest, national leaders were ignorant of these ways of living and shared beliefs systems.

A farmworker turned small landowner often became “a fundamental rural figure in the articulation of the local market with the region” (Fauné, 2014). Many also became local political figures to contribute to the betterment of their communities and region. Due to an owner's personal success and respect, his worker's often looked to him as a role model – someone similar to the worker who showed through his hard work that it was possible to get a small plot of land that one could then make produce. Small landowners protected surrounding families with some measure of economic stability in return for the families' work that helped the landowners' land produce and prosper (Morris, 2010).

The Sandinistas demanded that all small landowners join their hard won lands with others to work in Sandinista-controlled cooperatives. The many small, independent landowners who refused were immediately labeled traitors to the homeland, greedy

bourgeois producers who rejected the Sandinista fight for the common good at the peril of the nation (Fauné, 2014). This label served to justify the urban revolutionaries who then evicted those who refused from their lands to implement their one-size-fits-all food security project, while fueling resentments among those most affected. To the small landowners, the Sandinista usurpation was similar to the Somoza usurpations of the past when he allowed large landowners to take small plots families had cleared as their own using their private armies and forcing them to move north to clear tropical jungle once again. In their homogenous nearsightedness, the Sandinistas were blind and deaf to how their actions for the common good ruptured complex economic and social networks rural families had developed over generations for their survival and development. The Sandinistas were engrossed in their beliefs that their revolution would save the backward, ignorant farmer with their well-known large scale cooperatives.

When the Sandinistas nationalized rural lands in the north, including from farmers who only had 1.7 to 4.25 acres,⁵⁹ mutual mistrust grew into a potentially explosive situation. Resistance grew alongside the Sandinista label of resisters as the enemy of the people and the people's revolution. The history of many small landowners who had fought against Somoza's National Guard since the 1940s and 1950s, and who had supported and even incorporated into the armed Sandinista insurrection during the 1970s, was disparaged and ignored. The revolution's gross misunderstandings of rural life, its generalizations that equated landowners large and small, and its commitment to large-scale state and cooperative production fueled deep resentments and resistance to Sandinista interference (Fauné, 2014). Communities that felt misunderstood and under attack became fertile breeding grounds for the U.S.-financed contra rebels. The vicious cycle was fueled by homogeneous nearsightedness in governance combined with a Sandinista insistence on uniform implementation of "one single action" of one-size-fits-all programs following national orders. Ortega continued to govern through homogenous nearsightedness and marginalize central-northern mountain and Atlantic Coast communities. The combination of this generalized ignorance, Ortega's caudillo and contrarianist leadership styles, and his governance through a powerful waterfall of Sandinista discourse, orientations and supervision was devastating to regional development. Teachers worked within the

⁵⁹ 1 to 2.5 manzanas

government waterfall and its inability to embrace and realize the potential of respecting and developing programs based on Nicaragua's diversity rather than making decisions based on official ignorance and misunderstandings.

Chapter Summary

Ortega's strong set of belief systems, understandings and governing qualities lay the foundations for his National Human Development Plan and how he envisioned its program implementation across the nation. These same belief systems and forms of governance raised unintended challenges and contradictions for local implementers as they received orientations and tried to comply in diverse conditions – or voice concerns, objections and at times organized resistance. Ortega's caudillo politics sowed admiration and fear among different parts of the population. At times and with certain populations, it decreased consensus-building, local leadership and protagonism despite his discourse to the contrary. Ortega encoded his ideological beliefs in contrarianist discourse and a historic, values-laden narrative to justify overt politicization of all facets of government and last-minute planning and enforcement. His homogenous nearsightedness underscored a belief in forced unity through uniformity and compelled local implementers to choose between full or partial compliance or implementation of government orientations in varying degrees and methods – or outright boycott and opposition. His requirement of unquestioning loyalty among all public servants and Sandinista party faithful was reinforced in extreme cases through criminalized dissension and more regularly through threats, public humiliations and other punishments. This in turn enforced compliance by some through fear over loyalty, which at times affected the quality of implementation. The powerful waterfall eradicated accountability or responsibility of those at the top who did their job in designing and communicating their design to those below. Responsibility for outcomes thus fell on those at the bottom (the implementers). The government could blame low-level public servants for uneven or extremely poor results.

Taken together, these qualities of governance created difficult work conditions for teachers and local leaders. Challenges were magnified in marginalized communities that did not fit the government mold and where orientations were often impossible to implement because of their unique resources and needs – ignored by the government's one-size-fits-all programs and projects. When results and impact were low in these communities,

implementers and residents were to blame. This created a cycle in which the self-professed government of the people marginalized the already marginalized, silencing their voices and denying them development opportunities appropriate to their conditions and aspirations.

In the next chapter, I explain how themes discussed here permeated throughout the Ministry of Education and formal schooling system into the socio-professional settings in which teacher participants in this study worked. I analyze nuances and differences in how and when teachers complied or did not comply with government orientations, and why. This analysis contributes to understanding the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of how teachers negotiated demands on them from external contextual factors using their beliefs and knowledge to guide decision-making and practice.

Chapter Five

Socio-Professional Settings

Teachers and MINED officials worked together within overlapping socio-professional and physical settings that changed over time, participants and purposes. The settings were punctuated by strong government influences, including how they defined a teacher's professional knowledge and oriented teacher actions almost daily. Government influence began in teacher preparation offered in eight Normal Schools around the country. It continued in monthly planning and evaluation sessions during which officials guided teacher reflections, provided orientations about activities to implement in schools, and supervised teacher self-reporting. It also continued in intermittent professional development designed on the basis of Ortega's National Plan and a series of evolving policies, programs and orientations. Compounding ubiquitous government pressures was the education crisis within which teachers worked and for which they were frequently blamed.

In the midst of these powerful forces, teachers negotiated how best to "do my part" (common phrase). Individually and with colleagues they created wiggle room in which to adapt nationally-designed and directed one-size-fits-all orientations, ways of thinking and believing, and expected actions. Teacher adaptations vacillated between full compliance and outright boycott, and many actions in between. Wiggle room was not always a conscious act or related directly to education. Teachers' beliefs and knowledge about Daniel Ortega, First Lady Murillo, the National Plan (PNDH), formal schooling and education quality often contributed to how teachers understood government mandates differently and acted accordingly. Some disagreed with Ortega's politics, particularly his politicization of education. Many complained about hyper-contrarianist changes in policies and programs that often conflicted with standing policies to create insurmountable contradictions that teachers had to surmount. At other times government orientations were confusing or incomplete, and teachers raised concerns or questions based on teaching and learning criteria like the content of a mandate, the minimal and usually insufficient resources they had available to implement it, unintended consequences no one had raised or addressed, and why it may not achieve promised results. Though teachers were experts in predicting unintended consequences, particularly those that could interfere with student learning or conflict with other mandates for which they were also responsible, officials never used their expertise. They were at the

bottom of the waterfall as local receivers and implementers of mandates and orientations. In their position, teachers could voice concerns to each other and local MINED officials in professional gatherings, but no one had the power to respond and adapt orientations to local conditions. Only national leaders could change orientations, which they did regularly but more according to their national analysis of needs or political criteria like meeting international agreements or funding requirements. Teachers constantly drew upon their knowledge and belief systems to understand and act upon these multiple and constantly changing challenges each day within the context of an often crushing waterfall guided by caudillo and contrarian politics.

Originally, I conceived the setting for this study as the schools, classrooms and communities I visited regularly. As the study progressed, this expanded to include people, ideas and places in a shared socio-professional setting that influenced teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice historically into the present. This followed the idea that a field or setting is a created representation of the parameters within which a group operates. Though some boundaries may be physical, others are determined by “the outcome of what the ethnographer may encompass in his or her gaze [and] what he or she may negotiate with hosts and informants (Atkinson, 1992, p. 5)... ‘wherever reality-constituting interaction takes place’” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 354). The majority of the teachers’ formal socio-professional settings were bounded by the government, while many created informal socio-professional settings and networks to support their decisions and practices.

Background

When I asked Profe Liria where she would place the government if she mapped the education system as a kind of solar system,^{xlv} she immediately put it front and center as the sun. “For me, right, what is in everything in education, as the responsible entity and so the act of education functions, is the government.”⁶⁰ Everything was centered in the government “because it is the one in charge of guaranteeing education to the children of the country, and it is the one that..., the one that gives orders, how it is going to function, what is known as education.”⁶¹ Many teachers placed the MINED in this central position in their professional

⁶⁰ Para mí, verdad, lo que está en todo, en la educación, como responsable y como el acto de la educación para que esto funcione, está el gobierno.

⁶¹ Prácticamente así porque mire, todo viene desde aquí. Porque él es encargado de garantizar la educación a los niños, el país, y él es que..., el que da las ordenes, cómo es que se va a funcionar todo lo que es la educación.

lives. “As a school, we are guided here by the MINED...we see [the Municipal Ministry of Education] as the administrative part, the pedagogical part, right, the..., the *Delegada* as the *rector* of, of, of the institution,” Profe Fausto explained. “The rector is that which, it is, that which organizes us, controls us, that..., that executes us. That is the rector. So the rector here is the *Delegada*. It is the Municipal MINED for us.” Some teachers agreed with officials that “the socio-political environment in which schooling takes place [being] as important as individual families in affecting how students learn” (Carnoy, 2004, p. 12).

Teachers regularly explained and complained about *how* the government and Ministry of Education “organized, controlled and executed” their actions: through the waterfall of learning beginning with orientations designed and often emitted by First Lady Murillo. “There is a Minister of Education,” Profe Liria explained, “but she acts in accordance with the orientations the government gives.”⁶² Profe Regalia more bluntly called the Minister “the mouthpiece” and “puppet” of Murillo. The waterfall had been central to a government idea Profe Adriana supported: to join together “the best of the best” (Profe Adriana) in one school in the Southern Pacific region, to create “the best ideas in education, everything of the best in regards to strategies and methodologies, in regards to learning,” Profe Adriana told me. From that one national school, top leaders would pass along the “best ideas...to the Normal Schools, the Normal Schools to the Base Schools and the Base Schools were going to illuminate the little neighbor schools that are the ones that are the faaaartheest away in the country...The idea was that it would be like a waterfall of learning.” During her extensive description, Adriana used the verbs “radiate” and “illuminate” repeatedly to describe how the waterfall worked not just physically but in changing people’s beliefs and knowledge. Those at the top – the experts – radiated their ideas and influence to “illuminate” those all the way down at the bottom: the most isolated rural schools and teachers. The implication was they were the least educated and most in need of illumination from others.

By targeting teachers through its waterfall of learning, the government forced them to be regular consumers of the National Plan, its values and actions – and bombarded with their expanding role as protagonists helping to implement the Plan. Profe Fausto, a school principal and school nucleus leader, characterized teachers’ relationship with the Municipal

⁶² Aunque hay una Ministra de Educación, pero ella va de acuerdo a las orientaciones que también él [gobierno] da.

MINED and its waterfall as “permanent, maybe not daily, but every two, three days...at least if I don’t go [to the MINED offices] I have to be calling or receiving something.”⁶³ He then qualified that if he did not go or call, “we ask another colleague, ‘Did you go to the MINED yesterday?’ and information is brought to us. There are different communication channels that we have...We are always keeping an ear out.”⁶⁴ In this way, the MINED waterfall structured and defined most of the teacher’s work. It enabled almost immediate verbal transmission of information to all teachers within 24-48 hours. Its habitual use and extensive reach underscored deeply held beliefs that learning occurred by transmitting information to large groups of learners who would capture its meaning if they were motivated and interested. Fausto, a teacher trainer, referred to his role as “multiplying” content knowledge “in other municipalities and to other multigrade teachers.”⁶⁵ According to government and MINED officials, a motivated teacher could assimilate any information communicated and immediately use it in practice with people of all ages in their community. Teachers repeated this idea when talking about student learning and forgetting. Logically, teachers who did not fully implement activities as mandated – and students who did not learn – were unmotivated and disinterested; the MINED did its part by facilitating all necessary information to teachers, just like teachers did their part facilitating content in classrooms to students. The government hailed the waterfall as an efficient and effective teaching and learning tool.

To explain essential facets of the socio-professional setting in which teachers worked, I describe below how the MINED communicated and used its Shared Responsibility Model through the waterfall as an overarching guide to teacher practices, professional development and MINED supervision. Shared responsibility was a value the government used to engender widespread participation in its National Plan, with education one component among many in its societal transformation project – which was a shared responsibility among the entire population.

The Government of National Reconciliation and Unity under the light of the
Christian, Socialist and Solidarity Model has as its major strategic objectives to

⁶³ Yo diría que (pause), que es permanente. Que es permanente. Tal vez diario, diario, no. Pero cada dos, tres días, o sea, es en una, la forma permanente. Por lo menos si no voy, tengo que estar llamando o estoy recibiendo algo

⁶⁴ A veces no vamos ni llamamos pero preguntamos a otro compañero, ‘¿Y fuiste al MINED ayer?’ Y se nos trae información al uno. Son diferentes vías de comunicación que tenemos nosotros. Siempre estamos pendientes de eso. Sí.

⁶⁵ Yo las he multiplicado en otros municipios y a otros maestros de multigrado.

increase economic growth and jobs, eradicate poverty and extreme poverty, reduce social inequality, and improve the quality of the material, spiritual and cultural life of Nicaraguans. In the face of these challenges, Education and growth in Values and Transformation of conscience play a decisive role, with Educators as fundamental Protagonists of this process, fused with Fathers and Mothers, Students, Institutional Authorities, and Family and Community Organizations. (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, 2012, p. 1-2)

Part of a teachers shared responsibility in education was also in addressing the severe and unyielding education crisis. Since one of the greatest education challenges, access to schooling, stemmed from larger issues of societal inequity and underdevelopment, the government ordering teachers to work on these larger issues was directly related to improving education opportunities. I analyze how the government used two education policies to address the crisis in education and how these same policies created contradictions that deepened the crisis – and how teachers perceived and implemented them. The two policies – learning assessment and remediation – provide an understanding of teachers’ socio-professional settings, the kinds of mandates they juggled and common MINED-teacher interactions. A related influence on teachers was the government’s one-size-fits-all vision, methods and expectations that rendered regional diversity and individual differences irrelevant. Most of the participating teachers and families were born and raised in the San Jose de la Montana region and they shared a regional identity and history that contributed to their socio-economic activities and ways of living, knowing and interacting.

The socio-professional setting was comprised of multiple interactions, relationships, discourse, values (beliefs), and co-constructed understandings among teacher colleagues, pedagogic advisors and MINED officials. They communicated and interacted in a series of formal and informal settings. One overarching aspect of the setting was the government’s tenacious campaign to *sensibilizar*⁶⁶ or raise consciousness among teachers to develop a specific set of beliefs and actions. Its tactics vacillated most commonly among endless orientations (mandates), motivational reflections, professional development and a constant

⁶⁶ Sensibilizar requires description in its translation, as well as context. It is often used in the context of educating people, e.g., teachers in PD, parents in schools, residents regarding government policies and programs. Incomplete translations include raising awareness or consciousness, to make sense of or sensitive to, and, in most cases, to assimilate values and beliefs attached with whatever content is being imparted.

messaging of rewards for compliance and threats of punishment for non-compliance. While MINED officials tried to align teachers' commitment (beliefs) and actions around Ortega's National Plan in and out of the classroom, teachers filtered, acted upon or ignored the constant flow of orientations and pressures around them in relation to different personal and external factors and contexts. Ultimately, teachers determined the effects of the government's consciousness-raising efforts on themselves and each other.

Though physical settings, the education crisis and the MINED waterfall remained a constant in most teachers' lives, their socio-professional setting was ever-changing in the context of mutating policies, programs and campaigns that Murillo and the Education Minister often announced at the last minute and demanded an immediate teacher response. They constantly messaged beliefs, values, ways of thinking and knowing, and actions that they wanted teachers to adopt in line with the National Plan. To understand teachers and teaching, one has to understand the omnipresent force of Murillo and MINED officials on teachers' lives and the force of its caudillo and contrarian nature. I analyze two examples of government-imposed changes, and how teachers both understood and acted upon them. In the first, I analyze the Shared Responsibility Model and its expanded enactment in 2013. In the second, I briefly look at the 24-session *diplomado* "Improving Education Quality in Nicaragua" (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, April 2013) that focused mostly on government policies, programs and values. Each example shows dynamic interactions among the waterfall's official messaging, MINED official-teacher interactions and teacher-teacher relationships that combined with individual teacher understandings and beliefs to influence how teachers received, understood and acted upon (or outside of) MINED messages and expectations. This was a prominent part of teachers' professional setting. I then introduce a second major influence on teachers: the education crisis and government attempts to modulate how it was measured. I end the section with an analysis of two related MINED policies: all-school remediation and learning assessment changes.

***Sensibilizando* teachers to their role in the National Human Development Plan**

Government officials used the word *sensibilizar* freely when talking about Nicaragua's teachers and the education crisis. To many, once teachers were sensitized to embrace their new roles, societal transformation would proceed successfully and diminish the education crisis. With this belief in mind, the government developed a two-pronged approach

of teacher PD about values that sanctioned government programs combined with successive actions in which teachers enacted the values and programs in their school communities. This dual strategy was communicated and supervised through the waterfall to *sensibilizar* or change teacher beliefs over time. Though the word literally translates as “to sensitize,” “become sensitive” or “to make aware,” in Nicaragua it denoted a teaching-learning process designed to change people’s beliefs, attitudes and feelings – which would then change their actions. Teachers had to be *sensibilizados* about their role in the National Plan to fully embrace Ortega’s vision of societal transformation to then become dedicated community organizers and protagonists loyal to the government. To encourage these beliefs and attitude changes, teachers had to follow the government’s monthly values and how to enact them as communicated in Education Evaluation, Planning and Training Workshops (TEPCE⁶⁷). The government provided the information, discourse and procedures to follow, so teachers did not have to create their own understandings, share government values or decide how to enact them.

School principals played a key role in implementing the two-pronged strategy with teachers directly under their supervision. Adriana, the head of the San Jose school nucleus of 57 teachers (from the base high school and 12 neighboring multigrade elementary schools), explained how government and Sandinista Party officials met to plan “*sensibilización* work” to confront the low teacher response to the *diplomado*. A high-level Sandinista Party official had made a surprise visit to the San Jose nucleus to talk with teachers for over an hour. “[The government] they had the obligation to intervene,” Adriana explained, “and make the actors [teachers] aware...so she came to do that *sensibilización* work.”⁶⁸ Participation in the *diplomado* was critical because it was a vehicle the government created to address what it saw as a “need to update the teaching paradigms, foci and methodologies which requires sensitizing and strengthening teachers’ attitudes and values” (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, April 2013, p. 2). Teacher *sensibilización* through the *diplomado*, the government wrote in a “justification,” would be done “in such a way that allows advancement towards empowerment of scientific, practical, active, participatory, reflexive

⁶⁷ Taller de Evaluación, Planificación, y Capacitación Educativa (TEPCE)

⁶⁸ Como era una gran responsabilidad, verdad, que la que era la parte del gobierno, entonces ellos tenían que, tenían la obligación para intervenir y sensibilizar a los actores, que son directamente los maestros. Entonces, venía a hacer ese trabajo de sensibilización.

and innovative knowledge, that locates teachers in the center of opportune decision-making in relation to their performance in their educational level and context” (p. 2).

Profe Liria argued that efforts to raise awareness depended on teacher receptivity. She and her colleagues understood *sensibilización* processes because they were part of their work with students and family members. She described the government’s effort as “what they are doing is like *sensibilizando* the teacher that she needs to improve” in and out of the classroom. Liria believed officials would not be successful “because from the point of view of some teachers they accepted but others did not.”⁶⁹ Many teachers who perceived Ortega’s efforts to raise awareness as politically motivated rather than trying to improve education rejected attempts to expand their responsibilities outside the school and into the community. In the next section, I show how *sensibilización* unfolded in relation to one of the government’s most prominent values, Shared Responsibility, and its 2013 *diplomado*.

The Shared Responsibility Model. Everyone agreed that education was a shared responsibility, but which responsibilities and shared among whom and in what ways changed with conversations and contexts. Teachers, including Regalia, cited shared responsibilities among three schooling actors: “We are held together by our hands, the three of us... The class is shared... we are a triangle, teachers, students, families, the three have to be working in education”⁷⁰ (Profe Regalia, August 2013). The teacher’s role and responsibility was to facilitate information from the government curriculum in the manner and timeline expected and “give attention in the classroom to the student so he learns.” The parent’s role was “to give reinforcement in their home” to help students learn information they brought from school copied into their notebooks. “To help them also,” Regalia said, even if they did not have the literacy skills to enact this responsibility. The student “put his part, because if the student only arrives at school and at home doesn’t put his part, he doesn’t study, he’s not doing anything.”⁷¹ Teachers expected students to study and learn information at home, do all their homework and return to school ready to learn more. Behind this triangle making it all

⁶⁹ Porque del punto de vista de algunos maestros aceptaron y otros no

⁷⁰ Estamos agarrados de la mano los tres... la clase es compartida – alumnos, maestros y profesores... somos un triángulo, maestros, alumnos, y padres de familia, que los tres tenemos que estar trabajando con la educación.

⁷¹ Darle la mayor atención en el aula de clase al alumno para que le aprenda. Y el padre de familia refor-, dar un reforzamiento en su casa. Ayudarle también. Y el alumno tiene que poner su parte. Porque si el alumno solo llega a la escuela, y en su casa no pone su parte, no se pone a estudiar, nada está haciendo.

work by providing school infrastructure, curriculum, teacher training and more was the government.

The government agreed with the triangle of local actors and their shared responsibilities. Its role was to design, administer and supervise societal transformation including schooling. It imprinted shared responsibility into programs as diverse as drinking water and electricity projects, health prevention campaigns against dengue and cholera, reforestation and disaster mitigation efforts, and homeland defense against repeated incursions by Costa Rica. Though projects were designed and aligned with each other at the national level, they were implemented at different times and sometimes by different groups of people in local communities. Teachers, students and families were responsible for local enactment of its “strategic objectives” and its definition of education as “growth in values and transformation of conscience.” As local government spokespeople and protagonists of the National Plan, teachers were mandated to both get involved and involve school community members to enact projects that restored people’s basic rights while supporting community development. It was part of every person’s shared responsibility with everyone else. Teachers were to collect information from community residents to prepare for project implementation, spearhead education and communication about upcoming projects, and co-ordinate project implementation with other community leaders, the local Township and government agency offices located in their municipality or state. These coordinated efforts reinforced the explicitly stated idea that education was a shared responsibility tightly linked with much broader community development efforts.

An example of how the government metamorphosed the Shared Responsibility Model in schools, and how teachers understood it in different ways as it changed, occurred when the MINED formally announced policy changes in a national PD workshop. One waterfall tool the MINED used in PD was radio conferencing *en cadena* during which the government interrupted regularly scheduled programming to broadcast a government message over all government-controlled radio and TV stations. For PD, the government broadcast “radio conferences” by national experts to all 55,000 teachers simultaneously as they listened in their respective nucleus schools. For the Shared Responsibility workshop, teachers listened to three Ministers – of Education, Health and the Family, Adolescence and Childhood – give a unified message: Shared Responsibility was an inviolable part of their daily practice and that

of teachers; it encompassed the idea that everyone had rights and responsibilities that they had to exercise together (this content was in the *convivencia* and civics curriculum); and they did that by enacting positive values that led to positive behaviors that in turn led to coherency among one's identity, beliefs, knowledge and actions. Teachers "play an indispensable role... You have the key because you accompany families in learning these things," the Minister of the Family assured listeners. Each teacher practiced the Shared Responsibility Model, she said, and their work thus stemmed "from a humanistic philosophy and revolutionary ethic" guided by the government.

After the radio conference ended, the workshop facilitator for the San Jose nucleus – Profe Duilio, a Sandinista teacher's union leader and high school English teacher – presented the government's modifications to its Shared Responsibility Model. The first was its expansion of school enrollment which had been framed within the government's restoration of each child's right to a public education and which it now framed as a teacher's and parent's shared responsibility to ensure every child's right to a name (part of 1st/2nd grade curriculum and a national campaign) as well. This expanded framework connected a value (shared responsibility) to a traditional teacher responsibility (student enrollment) and expanded it into the community organizing realm. It justified the expansion as part of each teacher's responsibility to help the government ensure the restoration of basic rights to its people, particularly the most marginalized and impoverished.

Profe Duilio confirmed what teachers had heard through their informal networks: they would have to re-enroll all students by the end of the month. Unlike previous enrollment periods, though, teachers would now have to help families whose children did not have a birth certificate get one. Every child had the right to a full name, Duilio reminded teachers. That meant two last names, from their mother and their father. Teachers immediately began to talk amongst themselves about what this orientation would entail. The onus of implementation of this latest orientation fell most heavily on rural teachers where more families either had never gotten a birth certificate for their child or they did not have a copy. In addition, getting a birth certificate in rural areas implied higher costs for rural families (transportation) than their urban counterparts. Compliance with the mandate would require a minimum of travel and copy expenses that many families were unable to cover. Requesting an original birth certificate at Town Hall was an additional cost. The new mandate was

uniform across urban and rural areas with no adaptations for rural teachers and families who faced challenges unique to their rurality.

Teachers raised another issue the government did not take into account: the prevalence of incorrect information on birth certificates. The government identified incomplete certificates as the main problem – those with only the mother’s last name – but teachers said even more common were spelling errors and incorrect birth dates. Rural families or Town Hall staff, they said, incorrectly put the date families applied for a birth certificate as the actual date of birth even when the application was months or years after the child had been born. Confounding MINED records, parents often provided the accurate spelling or birth date at enrollment, or they provided different information each year for different reasons. Teachers knew that mandating correct and correctly documented enrollment information was extremely complicated for many families.

The administrative challenges were obvious, teachers protested, and this new shared responsibility was not within the purview of their job. “The mayor’s office should open a period of inscription of birth certificates,” a teacher yelled to the group. “Why can’t the Minister of the Family do this?” another cried out. Universal primary school enrollment was a national goal, Duilio reminded them, and education a human right. “Every child has the right to an identity, a legal identity,”⁷² he reminded them. It fell on teachers to help resolve it. “This is a shared responsibility,” he reiterated, “you will not do this alone.” Somehow children were graduating from sixth grade, going through high school, and not being able to graduate because “we’re finding, very late, they don’t have a birth certificate. We have to identify this problem way before their fifth [and final] year of high school.”

A group of multigrade teachers took offense at Duilio’s insinuation that they were not enrolling students correctly. They turned their backs on the facilitator, noisily moving their desks around to begin loud conversations among themselves about the proposal’s many challenges and unanswered questions. Would they have to travel into the city with each family to get a child’s birth certificate? That work expense, like all others, would never be reimbursed. This new effort would take away instructional time in the classroom and could

⁷² Cada niño, cada niña tiene derecho a una identidad, una identidad legal. Es una responsabilidad compartida. No van a hacer esto solas. No sabemos cómo pero muchos estudiantes están graduando de sexto [grado], hasta llegando a quinto año y no los podemos graduar porque estamos hallando, muy tarde, que no tienen una partida [de nacimiento]. Tenemos que identificar éste problema mucho más antes de quinto año [de bachillerato].

negatively affect student learning, something Murillo and other national leaders did not take that into account. Instead, they held teachers accountable to improve student learning while adding responsibilities out of the classroom. What would happen to families who could or would not comply? Duilio confirmed teachers' concerns: they could not enroll a child without an accurate birth certificate. Teachers commiserated. Some started naming families who would not send their children to school due to the new policy. Others expressed dismay that they would be blamed for declining enrollment. To them, responsibility for any declines lay in the enrollment mandate and the government's lack of understanding about challenges, things it did not take into account to ensure full implementation among poor, rural families. The workshop facilitator tried to calm their fears: "We can't take the child to the mayor's office to get their birth certificate, but we can sit down with the family and tell them what they have to do and how," he said, reminding them repeatedly: "It's a shared responsibility."

As with many of the government's efforts, teachers were told by their direct supervisors what they were to do, with whom, in what ways and by when. These orientations were designed by urban leaders with procedures they packaged as part of an historical push to transform society by restoring basic rights to the nation's poor. The government did not listen to teacher expertise regarding how and why a mandate may be difficult to implement or how it could negatively affect other schooling objectives – like student learning or decreased enrollment of school-age children. Teachers were not allowed to adapt mandates to local conditions but they were held fully responsible for implementing them – and overcoming any challenges they faced. Teachers questioned and disagreed with policies in private socio-professional spaces, but no one documented these concerns or communicated them to state and national leaders. Leaders then requested report-backs on numbers of families benefitted. The expansion of enrollment criteria under the Shared Responsibility Model was one example of how the government tried to *sensibilizar* teachers to implement actions beyond the classroom and with others as protagonists to help restore basic rights – in this case to a name and a free education.

The year of professional development and sensibilización. The government accelerated its efforts to *sensibilizar* teachers through three surprise announcements in early 2013 each one month apart. In January, days before teacher contracts began, Murillo announced a one-week training for the first week of February. Instead of enrolling students

and planning the first two months of classes in a TEPCE, officials would introduce Murillo's just released campaign, "Live Cleanly, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well." In late February, the MINED announced a new workshop series it called "Ongoing Formation in Values" beginning with three workshops in March on Disaster Mitigation, the Shared Responsibility Model and Learning Assessment. In the last of these workshops, the MINED announced the university-accredited 24-session *diplomado*. In contrarian fashion, the government cancelled its original series on values PD after only three sessions. With no input from teachers, the MINED suddenly required everyone attend a total of 32 hastily organized PD workshops from March to November, plus the ten normally scheduled TEPCEs at the end of each month. All were designed by national leaders and implemented through a three-tiered waterfall of replications.

The waterfall method and the PD focus harkened back to the National Literacy Crusade with a strikingly similar dual purpose: to quickly provide tens of thousands of teachers information about the National Plan and its values. This political objective overpowered the pedagogic one with less than one third of the sessions focused on two pedagogic themes: didactic planning and learning assessment. The diplomado's principal objective, Profe Adriana explained, was to raise teachers' consciousness and "chang[e] teacher attitudes at the national level"⁷³ regarding the government's Project and the role of education and educators. Changing teachers' beliefs and attitudes would change their actions which would increase education quality. Officials presented the workshops as an unprecedented opportunity for their personal and professional development that "most people would pay for" and "jump at the opportunity with excitement." They said Ortega was listening to teachers who requested more PD and many were thankful for the unprecedented opportunity.

Teachers held different perspectives. Citing the proposed content and methods, many questioned how the *diplomado* would improve education quality; it seemed more like a propaganda effort to promote Ortega's policies and programs. They questioned MINED insistence that improving quality was a short-term proposition that would occur through participation in the *diplomado*. Many refused to participate in the original schedule of workshops. Some said it was impossible to participate because all sessions outside

⁷³ El cambio de actitud de los maestros a nivel nacional.

instructional time; they had second jobs, family responsibilities (particularly single parents) or university classes on Saturdays. “My best sales occur on the weekend,” a high school teacher explained. “There is no way I will close [the store] and lose that income.” Single parents complained loudly about their right to see their children on the weekend. “I don’t have anywhere else to send my daughter,” a single father explained, while another teacher said she’d have to send her kids to family in a northern municipality and not see them until Sunday. Teachers resented public condemnations by MINED officials who labeled all teachers who did not participate as having bad attitudes or being unmotivated. Another generalized question concerned the government’s promise of different university credits for participants: teacher trainers would receive masters credit, teachers with credentials would receive undergraduate credit, and “empirical” teachers who had no teaching credential would receive credit towards their certification. Some also questioned why the government did not provide PD geared toward each teacher’s specialization, content area or a specific pedagogic need. Privately, teachers questioned the quality of their twice replicated workshops.

The government’s unprecedented PD offensive almost 35 years after the Crusade was similar in purpose and method. Like the Crusade, the PD waterfall provided an unprecedented platform for the government to raise teachers’ consciousness in the name of education pedagogy⁷⁴ (Castillo, 2013) and underscore beliefs and values the government sought to engender among its teacher population. The first workshop’s stated objective was to “learn together, increasing our knowledge and the capacities that allow us to know, value and assume with protagonism and leadership the advances and challenges pending to put into practice the National Human Development Plan from the Christian, Socialist and Solidarity Model^{xlvi}” (Vanegas, 2013). To better understand the force of government efforts to control teacher beliefs, knowledge and actions – and how teachers understood and maneuvered these efforts – I describe the PD waterfall under Ortega. I then analyze how official assumptions, understandings and methods contributed to wide variance in teacher implementation of PD in schools and classrooms rather than the one-size-fits-all homogeneous enactment Ortega envisioned.

⁷⁴ *Sensibilizar* was the verb people most often used when talking about teacher trainings and political talks aimed to make people sensitive to the message, or raise their consciousness so they would take action.

The waterfall in the *Diplomado* for Improving Education Quality in Nicaragua began with an expert – either a government Minister, a multi-lateral agency Director or a university professor – providing information for several hours to a small “nucleus” (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, April 2013, p. 2) of 230 high-level Sandinista leaders in the nation’s capital, Managua. Photos of one workshop could have been used for all workshops. They show men and women sitting in long rows of chairs in a cavernous room with a government official standing at a podium in front of the room talking to them. Some have notebooks on their laps, but most are facing forward, listening. Most experts are shown using a power point presentation or some other technology, as shown in the photo (above) of the Minister of MIFAMILIA.



Photo 6. The Minister of MI FAMILIA presents to Level 1 national educators, MINED INFORMA, May 2013.

Within a few days of receiving information from the expert, the 230 “Level 1”



Photo 7. State training of level 2 educators (replication). MINED INFORMA.

Danielistas or *Orteguistas* (Sandinistas loyal to Daniel Ortega) split into small groups and traveled to each of the nation’s 15 state capitals and two autonomous regions on the Atlantic Coast where they replicated the training they had just received with an average of 153 mid-level Sandinista leaders and educators per state. In one day, they trained a total of 2,600 state and municipal MINED officials and school nucleus leaders. These “Level 2” educators were “responsible to train the national teaching

force in a massive way to obtain their professionalization” (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, April 2013, p. 2) within 24 to 48 hours upon receiving their replicated training. Level 1 and level 2 teacher trainers received masters-level credits for training the country’s 55,000 teachers and pre-school educators. The photos of Level 3 replications

(above) showed teachers in student desks in school classrooms looking straight ahead, listening.

The *diplomado* drew on three kinds of national experts for Level 1 workshops: top government officials, usually Ministers; multi-lateral agency in-country directors; and two university professors. For public policy, Ministers of each government agency highlighted or a member of Ortega's cabinet of presidential advisors presented in an effort to "contribute to updating teacher knowledge, skills and abilities in education and the appropriate management of public policies" (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, April 2013, p. 2). Values expertise from Nicaragua's UNICEF director and top government officials was meant to help educators:

...work the personal dimension, reflecting and appropriating basic concepts about the Values for Good Living; likewise, that they internalize promote and practice them (sic), in their personal and professional life, assuming with enthusiasm the beautiful and noble task of accompanying the formation and transformation of new generations of Nicaraguans. (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, April 2013, p. 4)

Two professors from the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) provided expertise on didactic planning and learning assessment "in the pedagogical setting" (p. 6).

Though the waterfall created a constant current of information that flowed from one expert to 55,000 teachers in one week or less, I observed what many teachers and opposition figures pointed out: the waterfall failed to achieve its objective of massive *sensibilización*. Its explicit politicization and proselytization regarding "Christian, Socialist, Solidarity" values and the National Plan challenged many teachers' beliefs that formal education should focus on pedagogy and learning, and not be directed by or injected with Sandinista Party politics. Teachers who voiced anti-Sandinista or anti-Ortega beliefs, also voiced how the waterfall reinforced their beliefs – and did not sensibilizarlos more toward a Sandinista perspective. Others raised their rights to not work overtime in their school communities. When almost weekly PD in 2013 did not *sensibilizar* teachers into becoming dedicated, loyal Ortega followers or faithful implementers of his values education and National Plan programs, officials blamed teachers (learners). Officials publicly denounced teachers who did not participate or dropped out as unmotivated and even unpatriotic.

The waterfall's exclusive focus on information transmission from the few to the many passed over pedagogical and learning challenges teacher trainers and teachers-as-learners faced with each replication. While government discourse touted constructivism and "learning by doing," the PD waterfall exposed institutional beliefs about teaching and learning that effectively repudiated its constructivist discourse. School principals hinted at these contradictions but no one addressed them with superiors. Below, I analyze how assumptions about teaching and learning, and the idea that it could be proceduralized into a one-size-fits-all package, were principal contributors to failures in the PD push – more than teacher motivation or lack of patriotism (i.e., Sandinista opposition).

Government beliefs about teaching and learning

I found it necessary to understand institutional beliefs about teaching and learning through what I observed in classrooms and PD workshops, read in government documents, and discussed in interviews and informal conversations. What I observed and heard in classrooms and PD contrasted starkly with official constructivist discourse. These differences uncovered tensions and different understandings of teaching and learning among MINED officials and Murillo. These tensions and differences guided government design and implementation of all education programs, materials and orientations. I use teacher PD to analyze this dynamic, in part because it was such an enormous force in 2013 and in part because the government was every teacher's rector in and out of PD.

Government officials and teachers believed that teaching was best done by experts who could transmit their knowledge to learners who, by definition, were less knowledgeable. National experts passed their knowledge to level 1 teacher trainers who became experts in comparison to level 2 teacher trainers for the information received. This pattern was repeated down the waterfall and into the classroom, where teachers were necessarily experts in relation to their students.

Teaching and learning occurred through a standardized procedure of transmitting information verbally or in writing. Successful transmission could occur in one sitting and could happen either verbally or in writing. The expert or teacher transmitted information in what most educators called "giving" or "facilitating" content. Learners became experts as soon as they received the information transmitted to them, through what everyone called "learning," "assimilating" and "touching down" (like an airplane). This transformation from

learner to expert occurred, for example, among Level 1 officials who became teacher trainers in the PD waterfall after receiving information directly from national experts. It happened with each step down the waterfall and into the classroom, where teachers as experts transmitted information they received from the MINED to students and community residents. Officials believed that learning opportunities were the same at every level of the waterfall because experts at each level transmitted the content provided.

These beliefs about teaching and learning included a supposition of and esteem for uniformity. Teacher and student diversity was irrelevant. A teacher could use the same strategies across content and learners. Everyone learned the same information in the same way in the same period of time as one group. In line with homogenous nearsightedness, officials ignored challenges and opportunities presented by different teachers and learners. It adhered to one National Basic Curriculum in schooling and one in PD workshops, joining elementary and high school teachers together with the same content. Teacher and learner diversity increased with each step down the waterfall, with teachers at the top (level 1) being the most homogenous and those at the bottom (Level 3) being the most diverse, but the same content and methods were used throughout.

The focus was on content which trainers repeated in bite-sized, disconnected pieces. It was rarely sequenced and never explicitly related to other content, skills or experiences. When the MINED alternated workshops from among its three modules^{xlvi} rather than teaching each module as one 8-week class (as originally planned), a workshop from each module was taught every 4-5 weeks and spread across the entire year. Each workshop stood on its own. Profe Adriana approved of the change, exclaiming, “Isn’t it wonderful? No one gets bored that way!” Level 2 or local teacher trainers never knew the theme of the next workshop. Fausto and Adriana repeatedly told teachers they would know what was coming once they attended their training 24 hours before they had to replicate it to us. In this scenario, anyone could teach any content once they received it and knew the procedure required (an approved script). Teaching required little to no pre-planning and teacher trainers along the waterfall had no time to plan together or think about the content they received before repeating it. In replications, content transmission and reception was the focus; when completed, PD was deemed a success.

Upon receiving content, a learner learned by understanding the information, knowing how to use it and being able to teach it to diverse populations in distinct contexts with unequal resources. The MINED assumed teacher trainers learned content well enough to immediately know how to teach it with a small group of colleagues to a much larger group within 24 to 48 hours. The 55,000 teachers at the bottom of the waterfall (level 3) were expected to immediately incorporate what they learned in each PD workshop into their classroom planning and instruction with an extremely diverse group of learners: students, family and community members of all ages in every school community around the country. There was no discussion about how to do this, no replication script, and yet officials assumed it would happen. When it did not, officials criticized teachers. “Sometimes we observe that, even sometimes we come because it is a requirement, but we don’t appropriate what we have right there,” Adriana critiqued her colleagues. “We should appropriate to implement it,”⁷⁵ she asserted. Fausto characterized the training-into-practice gap as “fundamentally at times it is lack of willingness, first” on the part of each teacher. He then explained another challenge:

The second would be that sometimes the teacher wants to transmit that [information] with the, with the same, with the same I would say expanse that it was imparted to us. Sometimes we receive those trainings observing sophisticated models. But what is lacking sometimes is how to use the material in our environment to substitute the sophisticated. That is one of the difficulties of the teacher.⁷⁶

According to Fausto and Adriana the unwillingness to use content or adapt it to local conditions was not the responsibility of government trainings and teacher trainers. They placed complete responsibility on each teacher, sought no other explanation for lack of implementation of PD other than teacher unwillingness and sought no other solution than teachers changing their behaviors and motivation. According to this official point of view, transmitting and receiving information was all that was needed for every motivated learner to assimilate, appropriate and use content immediately with all ages and populations no matter what resources one had available or even how well one understood it. Learners who took a

⁷⁵ Mas sin embargo, a veces observamos que, incluso a veces venimos como por requisito, pero que no nos apropiamos de lo que allí tenemos. Deberíamos de apropiar para implementarlo.

⁷⁶ Lo fundamental que a veces es falta de voluntad, primero. Lo segundo sería de que a veces el maestro quiere como transmitir aquello con la, con la misma, con la misma diría extensión que a nosotros se nos imparte. A veces nosotros recibimos esas capacitaciones observando algunos modelos sofisticados, ¿verdad? Pero lo que hace falta a veces es como usar el material del medio para sustituir eso sofisticado. Entonces, allí es la, allí es uno de los pegas del maestro.

bit longer to appropriate information only had to copy and transmit the content with no explanation – similarly to how they would teach it when they more fully understood it.

This assumption of automatic transfer or translation of information was related to a shared belief that self-learning⁷⁷ was critical. Teachers would assimilate the information provided in PD after PD, just like students learned information by studying it at home. MINED officials and teachers cited self-learning to justify how much the PD schedule reduced classroom instruction. Despite original assertions that PD outside of TEPCEs would not occur during school hours, the MINED scheduled half the *diplomado* workshops on Friday mornings. All 55,000 teachers and their students lost a minimum of 12 instructional days with this schedule change; there were virtually no full 5-day week of classes between April and November. Level 2 multigrade teacher trainers lost 40 instructional days, one-fifth of the school year. Principals at unigrade schools who were level 2 teacher trainers had no classroom responsibilities and thus did not have this same pressure. The MINED ignored these hardships on rural multigrade schools. Teachers assured students they would provide the same amount of information no matter the reductions in instructional days. The MINED provided no substitute teachers and students were held responsible for learning the same content and skills as if they had attended classes normally. Parents often abstained from complaining but many privately shared, “that is not education quality.”

Self-learning outside the classroom was related to social learning or group work in the classroom. The teacher’s role in group work was telling learners to form groups and provide instructions. Teachers formed groups of all sizes from 3-12 people. Most days they self-segregated by pre-school, multigrade and high school. The transition to first form groups and then to begin the assignment were the learners’ responsibility, and they were often long and unwieldy. Teachers used the time to share personal and professional ideas and stories, punctuated intermittently by the question, “What are we supposed to do?” At some point, a pair or three teachers volunteered to do the assignment (infrequently I also observed groups who did not work, and once only one teacher did the assignment alone). I observed the same process in every PD. A teacher read the first question from the document while her colleague wrote it onto a blank piece of paper. They then searched for an applicable sentence or phrase in the document that would serve as the answer. Once someone found an answer, a teacher

⁷⁷ Auto-didáctico

dictated it to the scribe teacher who copied it below the relevant question. They then moved to the next question and repeated the process. These PD sessions converted group learning into a treasure hunt with no need to read, understand or discuss the content. When all questions were answered, another pair of teachers copied their question and answer sheet onto another clean sheet of paper to turn into the PD facilitator. A third pair wrote and decorated a cover page with everyone's name, school names, the PD event and date. The group presented this written packet to the PD facilitators with a separate group evaluation of the PD workshop as their exit slip. While most members of the group participated in creating the packet, no more than two to three teachers "read" the document – and only small parts. For the Municipal MINED, every teacher's learning was documented. The national MINED published one or more articles touting the success of PD that day – for every PD session.

The assumption that if teachers attended they would learn PD content and implement it in their classrooms and schools meant learning could effectively be measured by participation numbers. The government claimed it had trained between 37,000 and all 55,000 teachers each workshop. It published increasing participation numbers as the year progressed even as the number of participants fell. In our region a little over half of nucleus teachers participated at the beginning and by the end less than one quarter remained, all but two of whom were the youngest and least experienced. Each glowing MINED article about a recent PD workshop followed a familiar script: Municipal and State MINED Delegates, pedagogic advisors and school principals – mostly from the nation's capital – thanked Daniel and the Sandinistas for providing such unprecedented pedagogic support. Some assured readers: "I am sure that this day teachers are going to be very content" (MINED INFORMA, March 2013) and that teachers learned a lot and left satisfied. Many claimed that teachers were ready and enthusiastic to implement what they had learned into their classrooms and schools. Others assured readers that "This diplomado is one more piece of evidence that we are on a good path in improving education quality" (MINED INFORMA, April 2013).

The government did not measure teacher understandings, changes in teacher beliefs or classroom implementation, or any other PD effects on teacher or student learning. In many workshops it was unclear what exactly the MINED wanted teachers to learn, or what they wanted teachers to put into practice. Four of the diplomado's eight pedagogic workshops, for example, introduced content about new approaches to learning assessment. Workshop

designers did not incorporate or model any of the new approaches into how the *diplomado* functioned, having teacher trainers model formative or performance assessments with the teachers-as-learners. The focus instead was on transmission of content, leaving understanding and implementation to the individual learner.

As the MINED declared its own efforts a success (it transmitted information to all teachers), it blamed teachers for not implementing PD in schools. In private, MINED officials explained lack of teacher implementation in the same way teachers explained lack of student learning in elementary classrooms. Those who did not learn or know what to implement were at fault. They did not pay attention, were unmotivated or uninterested. Not learning was an individual's responsibility due to her or his attitude and motivation.

No attention was given to how PD content often conflicted with the government's policies or required procedures. The workshops on didactic planning, for example, thoroughly disavowed TEPCE procedures that teachers were required to follow each month. Teachers received written documents that highlighted flexible planning based on responding to learner needs and teacher knowledge, something absolutely prohibited under the one-size-fits-all curriculum and planning procedures (I analyze this in a separate document). The learning assessment content offered had no intersection with or mention of MINED-approved assessment policies, procedures and mandates. No one discussed the enormous gaps between what was taught in the eight pedagogic workshops and how teachers were authorized plan and assess student learning. With no recognition of conflicting content, there was no discussion about how to bridge how to bridge the gaps or if teachers were even authorized to do so. Since the TEPCE procedures continued each month, teachers rightly assumed the PD content was inappropriate for them to implement. In this way, much of workshop content remained in the realm of discourse more than practice.

Teachers provided other reasons for their lack of learning and implementation of PD content. Many cited low quality. Unlike teacher trainers who were MINED loyalists, level 3 teachers disparaged the waterfall method. "This *diplomado* is informal," Pelucita proclaimed. "Practically it is a reproduction. Why? Because the teachers that go to these trainings are not prepared for what they give in the *diplomado*." She then provided a forceful critique of the waterfall of learning.

It's like they go on a ladder. I think those that go on the first level are the ones who are trained because they are [trained] directly by the UNAN [Autonomous University of Nicaragua]. But those that come to train us, the teachers, no. How am I going to prepare myself or how am I going to have command of a theme in something that I received yesterday and I am going to impart today? No, it's not logical. And it's much worse for those that give from the second level to the third level. Not even close.⁷⁸

Many, including Pelucita, thought they “would receive two or three general workshops” and then be able to focus on an area of interest – something officials promised for the following year. The teachers said they attended the general 2013 PD to gain entry to that next step (which was never offered in 2014).

Many teachers dismissed the 2013 PD as “politicized” and saw little they could learn from it. Many of the older teachers who did not participate cited this as one reason. Profe Pelucita described it as “practically they are education policies of the [Sandinista] party, what the government wants to achieve. Nothing more.” Evidence of politicization was constant. Officials affirmed they sought to “transform consciousnesses” and promote values of Christianity, socialism and solidarity. Teacher trainers were encouraged to demonstrate “that the politics of the government of Daniel Ortega were a ‘help to the population’ and so the country could go forward” (Castillo, 2013) when they took PD to the communities. Multigrade teachers were positioned as organizers in their communities for the change of “values, attitudes, priorities, style of governance, relations of power and policies”⁷⁹ (Vanegas, 2013, p. 2). Through their work, they helped the government gain “macroeconomic stability, sovereignty, security and integration in harmony with Mother Earth in benefit of Nicaraguan families”^{80xlviii} (Vanegas, 2013, p. 3).

Another concern of many teachers was that the 2013 PD push was mostly a public relations campaign to blame teachers for the education crisis. If the government could convince the public it was doing its part to increase education quality, that Ortega was

⁷⁸ Esos como van en escala, mire. Primer nivel, pienso yo, que los que van a Managua el primer nivel, si están capacitados porque son los de la mera UNAN. Pero ya, los que vienen a capacitarnos a los maestros, no. ¿Cómo voy a prepararme yo o como voy a tener dominio de un tema yo en algo que, que recibí ayer y lo voy a impartir hoy? No, no tiene lógica. Y mucho peor los que van a, los que dan de segundo nivel y que dan a tercer nivel, nada que ver. Entonces, prácticamente es una reproducción de contenido, nada más.

⁷⁹ El 10 de enero del 2007, no sólo se cambió de gobierno, se inició también un cambio de valores, actitudes, prioridades, estilo de gobernar, relaciones de poder y políticas.

⁸⁰ Con estabilidad macroeconómica, con soberanía, seguridad e integración con la Madre Tierra, en beneficio de las familias nicaragüenses.

listening to teachers by providing almost weekly PD for most of the school year, if parents did not see improvements towards quality the only person to blame was their child's teacher. These fears were confirmed for participating and non-participating teachers when almost one year after finishing the *diplomado* no teacher had received university credit or any response to the final portfolio of work each teacher had created and local teacher trainers had graded – and never returned. It was confirmed when the promise to provide more tailored pedagogical PD in 2014 as a follow-up to the 2013 “introduction” never materialized. The crisis continued as perseverant as always.

Nicaragua's crisis in education

Teachers worked in a crisis environment. Government officials used five internationally-recognized indicators to measure the crisis, three of which were directly a teacher's responsibility: enrollment, grade repetition and pass rates. These affected the other two longer-term indicators: graduation and drop-out rates. Enrollment numbers remained steady between 1.6 and 1.7 million students; approximately 1 million school-aged children (37%) did not attend school. Rural families continued to have the least education opportunities and highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty. Rural children on average spent 3.7 years in school while the national average was 6.1 years (Vijil, 2014). An infrastructure deficit affected universal access as did a teacher shortage of approximately 10,000 teachers. To address the crisis, the government built and renovated schools, supplied furniture and curricular materials, and offered accelerated teacher preparation programs. It passed policies and programs to encourage teachers to improve enrollment, grade repetition, and pass rates. In 2013, multi-lateral agencies began to shift their attention and funding away from access and the five indicators, and towards education quality. While the Ortega government's discourse shifted in kind, its actions continued to focus exclusively on universal elementary access. The government constantly changed policies and programs to improve education quality even though the changes were designed to improve the five school access indicators. Teachers were mandated to implement changes and in the changing discourse were most regularly blamed for the crisis continuing. This environment affected teachers' decisions and daily work in multiple ways.

International agreements focus on access and retention. Though Ortega and Murillo linked Nicaraguan education policies to their National Plan (PNDH) and societal

transformation, they corresponded to international agreements and funding. Nicaragua's "serious financial need, significant poverty rates, small country/economy size, and peace processes under way" (Corrales, 2006, p. 456) had attracted numerous international aid institutions (e.g., USAID) and multilateral agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank) since the 1990s. At the same time, accepting international aid made the country "more susceptible to the ideas pushed by multilaterals, all of which were eager to decentralize social service provision and help countries implement education reforms" (p. 456) exactly as they saw fit and as their funding determined. Nicaragua agreed to achieve universal elementary education by 2015 (UNESCO millennium goals) and to use the five indicators to measure progress towards that goal (Jatau, 2008).

How the government implemented international agreements mirrored and reinforced many aspects of Ortega governance in general. Agreements often provided pre-defined goals and one-size-fits-all programs that overlooked and discounted unique country conditions and the effects of in-country diversity. Agencies funded a few small, "model" projects that the government later replicated by sending self-learning PD materials (written documents) to some schools with the mandate to implement the program after studying the document. Top-down decision-making was cloaked in a discourse of decentralization and autonomy. Programs and promised outcomes generally over-simplified problems and solutions. Taken together, these factors demonstrated policy makers' lack of knowledge and accompanying disinterest in addressing the complexity of teaching-learning processes and root causes of Nicaragua's crisis. Ortega and international funders relied heavily on step-by-step proceduralization of program implementation to ensure uniformity, arguing it was necessary to achieve promised results. Program evaluation used the same indicators across programs and geographical areas, measuring outcomes without attempting to understand why or how to improve the numbers, i.e., repetition or drop-out rates. Instead, every semester NGOs held education forums and reporters wrote articles that confirmed the gravity of the education crisis, how little to no progress on the five indicators had been made, and calling on the government and teachers to do more.

Ortega and international agencies tended to cite successes over failures, particularly in a particular school. When results were not achieved, the logical responsibility rested with local implementers. Program design or administration was never questioned. A second

common explanation was poverty. Nicaragua was the second poorest country in the hemisphere after Haiti. Little attention was given to understand and address the multifaceted and institutional nature of Nicaragua's severely challenged education system – as a system. Despite the generalized nature of the crisis, multilateral agency staff, government officials and families liberally placed blame on individual teachers. Failures were due to teacher attitudes and motivation, outside of national and international control or influence.

Just as Ortega's homogenous nearsightedness marginalized communities that did not fit its mold, the international one-size-fits all approach to improving education around the world was ineffective in helping Nicaragua address its unique and numerous challenges. As the deadline for achieving universal elementary education neared (2015^{xlix}), UNESCO announced that improvements worldwide in school access, curriculum and teacher preparation had eclipsed the need to focus on access (and its five indicators). School access, UNESCO argued, meant little if the education children accessed was irrelevant to their lives and of low quality. Nations would now attend to "education quality" and "student learning opportunities" with new goals (and funding) for 2021. Even though Nicaragua lagged well behind its neighbors in school access, curriculum development and teacher preparation, it had to follow the changes lock-step to continue to receive the funding it desperately needed for education. Nicaragua would have to do triple duty to achieve universal access and simultaneously improve education quality with less funding.

International education indicators: How Nicaragua measured up. Though the Ortega administration regularly claimed to make progress on the five traditional indicators, it was difficult to measure or confirm their claims due to data availability. Program evaluation and measurement had always been a perennial challenge in Nicaragua, and it continued under Ortega (Cáceres, 2014). Some questioned how much of the issue was capacity and how much was will because it was difficult to tell the two apart. Most data collection about schooling was done by hand. Few systems were computerized and most Municipal MINED officials and teachers were computer illiterate. In 2013 when the Municipal MINED announced it had lost enrollment data and teachers had to collect it again, no one explained how the data was lost and teachers did not ask. Each school and individual teacher provided a litany of hand-written reports each month to their supervisors in monthly TEPCE meetings. The MINED reported very little back, and the few times they published raw data or percentages many

people questioned their accuracy. Usually there was no way to independently verify published statistics. Murillo announced enrollment numbers several times a year, and national rates of repetition, promotion, graduation and drop-outs were almost impossible to find or were outdated. Rather than aggregate data, the MINED reported on personal success stories from a school or district with inspirational quotes from a pedagogic advisor, a principal and a teacher. To show the education crisis by the numbers in this section, I used the most recent data available, beginning with student access to school.

Though the government preferred to measure school access with enrollment numbers, international agencies and NGOs added two additional measures: survival rates and infrastructure. In 2012, matriculation in primary school was officially around 92%. Educators outside government put the figure closer to 87% with a tendency toward decline (Vijil, 2014). School survival rates provided additional understandings to enrollment numbers. The highest school survival rates in Nicaragua's history had been under Ortega. They increased less than one entire grade to 5.9 grades on average nationally – almost graduating from elementary school. Urban students dropped out on average within less than one month after their transition from elementary to high school while rural students, on average, did not graduate elementary school; they survived, on average, 3.7 years in school. The education system failed rural students who were not prepared for the transition into 3rd grade. First and second grade focused mostly on two classes, math and language arts. Teachers provided extraordinary time to complete assignments and most children passed if they attended class regularly and learned to copy from the board and textbook. Third graders suddenly had to manage five content areas with copious copying and dictation in shorter class periods. They had to copy correctly so they could memorize the information at home and re-present it faithfully on in-class exams. Elementary teachers pointed to this difficult transition and high school teachers pointed to a similar transition from elementary to high school; many children did not survive.

Infrastructure was an enormous challenge to achieving universal elementary access. In 2011, a non-governmental organization reported that there were “10,750 public schools which have 27,827 classrooms,” (IEEPP, 2011, p. 13-14), 68% (18,868) of which were in rural areas and 32% (8,959) in urban areas. Less than half were in a “good state” (47%).¹ Lack of infrastructure and crumbling buildings disproportionately lowered access to

schooling in rural, impoverished communities (see graph B.1, Appendix B).^{li} No school on the rural Atlantic Coast, for example, had gotten maintenance since before 1995 and 90% either lacked hygienic services or they were deteriorated (IEEPP, 2011, p. 15). When Cuthbert (2011) analyzed MINED data by geographic areas and levels of poverty for school aged children (3-18 years old) he found that only 62.4% reported attending school (see Appendix B),^{lii} with a wide gap between urban and rural areas (72.7% and 56.4%, respectively). The lowest percentage was among poor rural children: less than half (48.3%) attended school compared with two-thirds (65.9%) of urban school age children living in poverty. In 2013, less than 32% of rural residents between 20 and 29 years of age had completed high school. The rate dropped to 25% (one in every four) for 30 to 34 year olds living in rural communities^{liii} (UNESCO, 2013). These data demonstrated an institutionalized and historic marginalization of rural families, communities and entire regions from formal schooling – and from opportunities higher education provided.

Another indicator added even more information to understanding school access: grade repetition (see graphs B.1 and B.2, Appendix B). Approximately half of all children who repeated a grade in primary school repeated first grade (50.2%), while one fifth (21.5%) repeated second grade. Grade repetition dropped precipitously in third grade to 8.5%. Rather than repeat third grade, many students dropped out. Males repeated grades more than females, rural students more than urban ones. The high incidence repetition in the lower primary grades was reproduced in high school; more than half of students either repeated or dropped out their first year (7th grade). Research has shown negative effects on students who repeat grades and classrooms with student repeaters in four dimensions:

- 1) Academically: repeaters tend to fall behind with time and many drop out;
- 2) Socially: self-esteem, peer relationships and attitudes towards school decline;
- 3) In classroom functioning: repeaters contribute to larger class sizes with wide age ranges which increases classroom management issues; and
- 4) Budgetary investments: repeaters cost the school system more money (Brophy, 2006).

In Nicaragua, how to address these negative effects or reasons behind high repetition rates in lower grades (i.e., transitions) were not systematically studied, discussed or reported.

Repetition rates corresponded to student pass rates. In rural areas, almost one of every four students who began the school year did not pass (22.9%). The government calculated these rates with end-of-year enrollment numbers to present a much lower 11.4% of students not passing each year (see Table B.3, Appendix B). Every classroom lost on average between 6 and 10 children each year – a tendency I observed in three of four participating schools. Children living in extreme poverty in rural communities had the lowest pass rate (72.2%) followed by their urban counterparts (75.9%).

As enrollment stagnated with at least one million children not accessing primary education, and rates of school survival, repetition and promotion not improving, the pressure to achieve universal primary schooling increased. In response, Murillo announced sweeping changes to student assessment (e.g., automatic promotion, a new grading system) to reduce repetition to 0% and ensure a perfect 100% pass rate. She institutionalized out-of-school remediation during summer vacation to a 2-day/week in-school program for all students under grade level. If indicators did not improve under the new policies, the only person responsible was the teacher. Municipal MINED pedagogic advisors were tasked with supervising teacher compliance. I explain the policies below and how teachers' varied understandings influenced when and for whom they put the policies into practice.

Education policies to tackle the crisis

The government offered policies to address the education crisis. To understand several characteristics of these policies and how they affected teachers, I focus on two below. MINED officials and the media emphasized automatic promotion and student remediation during the 2012-2013 school years. They were also omnipresent in teacher and parent conversations.

Automatic promotion and student remediation. Each calendar year ended with dire predictions in the media about upcoming university entrance exams and each new calendar year began with huge fanfare around the exam results: between 90% and 98% of graduated high school students failed to reach a minimal passing score of 60. Articles with headlines like “Only 254 students passed the Engineering University exam” (Moncada, 2016) included strong denouncements of education's low quality. All universities had to accept “second level” students who earned between a 40 and 59 score on the exams (Torres, 2015) to fill their classes. The Secretary General of the National Engineering University decried a

“mechanized” education offered by the MINED (Castilla, February 24, 2011) while the President of the National Council of Universities (NCU) denounced a vicious cycle: the MINED prepared low performing students who attended universities that could not prepare them as qualified professionals to help lift the country out of poverty. The “enormous gaps in education keep [Nicaragua] the second poorest country in America”⁸¹ (Castillo, February 24, 2011). Another public figure asked, “How can you have almost all high school graduates who want to study different professions at the UNAN-Managua, have poor results on the admissions exam for math and Spanish, when it’s the same UNAN-Managua that prepares the high school math and Spanish teachers?”⁸² (López, January 16, 2012).^{liv} The government responded to the increasing public outcry and pressure with a package: “Solidarity Remediation” combined with new assessment policies and strategies.

The MINED mandated a new 60/40 grading system in which exams went from comprising 100% of a student’s grade to “four exams valued in 40 points each” (Bermudez, Feb 2011) or 40% total. The other 60% was to be based on formative and performance assessments, but officials could not clarify what exactly they were or how to design them other than mention “investigations” or what teachers were already doing, like class work and homework. The MINED published *Didactic Planning and Evaluation of Learning* in 2009 and *Didactic Planning and Evaluation of Learning in Primary Education Manual* in 2010. Through the waterfall of learning, pedagogic advisors led one 3-hour training each year in 2011 and 2012 to large groups of teachers. In the San Jose region, over 100 teachers listened to a pedagogic advisor read the 2010 document aloud to them at the local elementary school.^{lv} The MINED promised a copy of the document to each school, but many never received it.

Teachers used what they already knew and what they understood of the new mandate: exams and homework. This tendency was reinforced when officials repeatedly provided more details about exam changes than any other part of the mandate. Even though the MINED included “exam weeks” at the end of each quarterly period in the school calendar,

⁸¹ Talavera explicó que si no se consigue que se articulen cada uno de los subsistemas que conforman al sistema de educación en Nicaragua, el país continuará enfrentando las enormes brechas educativas que lo mantendrán como el segundo país más pobre de América.

⁸² ¿Cómo es posible que casi todos los bachilleres que desean estudiar en la UNAN – Managua distintas profesiones, tengan pobres resultados en los exámenes de admisión de matemáticas y español, siendo que es la misma UNAN-Managua la institución que forma los profesores de Secundaria de matemáticas y español?

they ordered teachers to offer quizzes more frequently. They were also now to provide a short question-and-answer study guide which was the exam or quiz with only the questions; students were to provide the answers exactly as they appeared on the study guide. Finally, teachers were told to provide as many attempts as every student needed to take each assessment until they passed with at least a 60 score. Murillo announced the changes repeatedly on government-controlled radio and television and encouraged families to denounce teachers who did not comply. She did not renounce the standing policy that directed teachers to only pass students to the next grade who earned a minimum score of 60 in *all* classes. The latter remained in effect belatedly because pedagogic advisors discredited it in practice. They regularly told teachers to inflate grades of failing students to comply with automatic promotion. In TEPCEs and other PD, they warned teachers that the Delegate viewed students who did not reach the minimum 60 score as either not having a good teacher or being uninterested in learning – and she could not say all failing students were uninterested in learning. There were no other excuses under the new policies. Teachers and many others in Nicaraguan society described the changes as a package geared “to comply with the MINED’s institutional goals” (Castillo, June 6, 2012) and international agreements at the expense of student learning.

Though the MINED enacted the “School Solidarity Remediation⁸³ Program” before the assessment policy changes, no official associated the two. Remediation or the literal “reinforcement”⁸⁴ was part the Shared Responsibility Model in which teachers, students and families together decreased grade repetition and increase pass rates. Murillo never enunciated how automatic promotion relied on successful remediation to ensure that students who were below grade level did not get farther behind when they passed automatically to the next grade. The policies were implemented as separate, disconnected mandates teachers were required to enforce to reach the goal of universal primary education. Each policy was subject to last-minute changes and adaptations as top leadership saw fit and they provided no training on solidarity reinforcement. They assumed accurate implementation would make a difference; teachers remained skeptical from its beginnings.

⁸³ Programa de Reforzamiento Solidario Escolar

⁸⁴ I use the term “remediation” as a more accurate U.S. translation. “Reinforcement” is the literal translation that describes the effort to remediate low student learning performance through repetitive reinforcement classes.

Murillo first introduced solidarity reinforcement in 2011 when she mandated teachers to provide extra hours of instruction during the last few weeks of summer vacation. The mandate was illegal and few teachers volunteered, so Murillo put local Sandinista Youth and members of the Sandinista Teachers Movement to proctor “reparation exams”⁸⁵ before classes began in mid-February. Most students passed to the next grade. Those who joined local Sandinista Youth groups received “benefits” for their membership (Castillo, June 6, 2012), including passing exams if they earned less than a 60 score. These widely documented irregularities raised questions about remediation: was it designed to increase pass rates by whatever means, organize youth into Sandinista organizations, or improve student learning? Many teachers and families expressed concerns that the government was so fixated on the first two objectives that it lost sight of student learning.

The following year (2012), Murillo expanded remediation to occur during the school year. Teachers were to dismiss children at or above grade level one hour early and work with those who stayed behind. Most schools cut the 5-hour class schedule by at least 30 minutes so they erroneously denounced the mandate as a demand to work extra hours. MINED supervision was anemic and mostly absent. Most principals did not enforce it, and non-compliance remained the norm. In March 2013, Murillo announced the same remediation program framed within the Shared Responsibility Model. “We have to identify the children who need extra help and we have to provide it,” the San Jose workshop facilitator explained. “It is a shared responsibility. We have to inform the family about each student’s needs, and how they can help at home. It is a shared responsibility. Each of us does our part in shared responsibility.” Murillo expanded MINED supervision and teacher accountability. Principals had to submit student names from each teacher to the pedagogic advisor and implement a national Tuesday-Thursday remediation schedule from noon to 1pm. In May, Murillo redoubled supervision. Teachers had to submit weekly reports on remediation actions, participants and progress to Municipal MINED offices in person. Most principals enforced remediation at their schools. Later the same year in anticipation of university entrance exams, the MINED asked high school teachers to volunteer for several week-end remediation classes in math and language arts for graduating seniors.

⁸⁵ Exámenes de reparación

As remediation classes became institutionalized, MINED articles told personal stories of teachers being protagonists in their schools, taking on this shared responsibility to help their students and families be successful. The positive public face disregarded the challenging socio-professional environment in which teachers worked. After three years of modifications to mandates and uneven teacher compliance, student learning remained low (measured by student grades, pass and repetition rates, and college entrance exam scores). The lack of promised results was related in part to varying levels of knowledge and understanding regarding assessment and remediation on the part of government officials and teachers. In the next section, I show how teachers negotiated understandings of each policy's content and implementation; how teacher understandings often clashed with those of the MINED; and how these differences influenced decisions teachers made about how to implement the policies in their classrooms. These negotiations under "caudillo + contrarian + loyal compliance" governance were part of every teacher's daily practice.

Teacher understandings of assessment and automatic promotion. The most common perception teachers expressed was that automatic promotion and the new assessment mandates were effectively giving away a passing grade (60) to students in an attempt to reduce repetition and "failed students" through "an orientation to reduce [them] however possible" (Castillo, June 6, 2012, p. 1A). The focus was on the numbers or indicators, teachers complained, not student learning. Students could attain a passing grade of 60% without learning academic content. A teacher's union characterized the changes as part of the Battle for the Sixth Grade (universal primary education) "to get the least amount of students failing their grade in the year of 'Unity for the Common Good'" (p. 1A). It created "an education model" that helped students pass classes "without any guarantee of quality" or learning, providing "the possibility that a student passes without complications" (p. 5A). The government would improve pass rates to show compliance with its international commitments and secure continued funding.

When the government mandated its 60/40 grading system, many Municipal MINED officials and teachers struggled to remember which number represented exams (most opted for 60% because they couldn't really cut it back to 40%). Even more difficult to remember for many people was how teachers were to determine the other 60 or 40 points. Teachers provided examples they had heard MINED officials give them: desk work, quizzes,

homework, attendance, classroom behavior and effort. Principals communicated these changes to parents in the first parent meetings of 2012. In three different schools, principals told parents “there are no more exams” and “exams are out.” Students would be graded on projects and classroom assignments, they explained, “orders from above.” No principal mentioned Murillo’s policy of automatic promotion for all primary and secondary students to parents. Reina explained why: “we don’t agree with it.”

One enormous disagreement teachers had was their shared perception that the new assessment policies focused on students getting what Liria termed “a failing grade” of 60. She worried aloud that the government was telling teachers to shift their efforts to students below grade only at the expense of those at grade level or above. She and many colleagues said the changes dumbed down and minimalized each year’s curricular content. Deteriorating an already challenging multigrade classroom further, more students would pass to the next grade with a score of 60 (or less), creating a downward spiral for students and teachers alike. The students who entered on scores of 60 began each school year with a handicap, got farther behind during the school year and learned even less content – getting farther behind. The approved planning methods enforced uniform implementation of each grade’s unit exactly as it appeared in the curriculum on a uniform schedule. Even if the majority of third graders had not learned second grade content well, a third grade teacher had to follow the third grade curriculum as if their students had the foundational knowledge. Teachers repeatedly told struggling students, “You already learned this. Profe [Fulana]⁸⁶ gave it to you last year!” or “I gave it to you last month! You can’t tell me you didn’t learn it.”⁸⁷

Students who barely passed lower elementary grades arrived in third through sixth grades facing often insurmountable academic disadvantages. Emilia, Ambrosia and Regalia in mid-grades – and Fausto, Pridi and Liria in upper elementary grades – all had groups of students who could transcribe (or not) in decent handwriting but could barely read, could not write their own “simple sentence,” or who could only do basic addition and subtraction. One of Regalia’s fourth graders copied so well from the board I was skeptical when he refused to read what he had written during my first visit. His cousin and other classmates immediately

⁸⁶ So-and-so

⁸⁷ Ya aprendieron esto. ¡Profe [Fulana] se les dio a ustedes el año pasado! ¡Esto se los di el mes pasado! ¡No me pueden decir que no lo aprendieron!

came to his aid, confirming that he could copy from the board but could not read anything he wrote.

Teachers and MINED officials continued to rely on exams to calculate student grades. All adults' schooling experiences were based on exams as the only way to measure student learning. No teacher agreed with the mandate to provide multiple testing opportunities to students so they could reach the "failing" grade of 60. Ambrosia denounced it as "creating irresponsibility."

Students say, 'If I don't go today, tomorrow they'll give it to me.' Even the parents say, 'Don't go,' and then they come and ask, 'Will you give my son the exam another day...we had to go to the health center,' and maybe they weren't even there...They probably didn't go! So, they are asking me for a favor, and one has to do it because they know we have to give the test again if they didn't go to school exam day.⁸⁸

Liria got particularly livid and emotional: "When we talk about education quality, is it education quality to pass a child, going back to the same thing, with a 60 when that child did not even earn a 40? That is quality education?"⁸⁹ Teachers felt the government's new policies increased teaching and learning challenges in their classrooms rather than helping to resolve them.

Many teachers also questioned the study guide mandate. Most said it negatively affected student learning as well. "So now what happens?" Ambrosia asked. "You have to give the child a [Q&A] guide...to help the student, they say." It had to be short, she explained, because MINED officials told them long tests harmed children. "They say it is too much work for the child." But it crippled student effort, Ambrosia argued, which negatively affected learning.

For a child to have in reality good learning, something significant that they will not forget, right, for me I think that it would be like this. A little more studying, more about content, and not giving them study guides with ten questions [with the exam] based solely on those questions. They become accustomed to not studying. They

⁸⁸ Si porque está criando como, una irresponsabilidad. Los estudiantes dicen, 'Si no voy, mañana me lo hacen.' Hasta los mismos padres de familia dicen, "No vaya." Y después me vienen donde mi y preguntan "¿Allí me hace el examen al niño para otro día? Fíjese que tuvimos que ir al centro de salud." Y tal vez no estaban allí...Y a lo mejor no andaban allí. Entonces, están pidiendo a uno que les haga el favor. Y uno tiene que hacerlo porque saben que tenemos que dar la prueba después si no llegaron.

⁸⁹ Cuando hablamos de calidad educativa ¿será calidad educativa aprobar a un niño, volviendo a lo mismo, con 60 cuando ese niño ni llega a 40? ¿Eso es calidad de educación?

don't study the rest. They only wait for you to give them the guide and they only study the guide. They know that only those questions are going to appear.⁹⁰

Ambrosia also shared her colleagues' concerns that the exam guides and short exams gave teachers little information about what and how students were learning, and where they faced difficulties.

If I give them a big test I will come to know all the child knows. I put different points in the exam and I am going to realize [what the child knows]. But if I only put three exercises or three little questions, I do not feel it is satisfactory because maybe it was learned, but what about the other content?⁹¹

In contrast to the MINED's stated goal, many teachers critiqued the 60/40 grading system as a mandate to grant a passing grade to students whether they learned content or not. Under 60/40 teachers had "to take into account if the child came to class daily, if s/he did the homework, how did s/he behave in class (pause), all of that."⁹² Teachers felt they were being told to pass every child who came to class each day and did their in-class work and not worry about whether they learned the content. "For me, attendance doesn't have anything to do with content," Ambrosia exclaimed. "One thing is to arrive [to class], and another is [the student] arrived and didn't do anything in class. That happens."⁹³

Teachers used what they understood from the mandates and spoke frequently of balancing three factors: 1) what they knew and believed about learning assessment (that it happened via exams), 2) what they understood were the components in the new mandates that the MINED supervised (and thus valued most), and 3) how pedagogic advisors answered

⁹⁰ Por ejemplo, para que en realidad el niño tenga un buen aprendizaje, algo significativo que ellos no se les olvide, verdad, para mí yo pienso que sería así, pues. Un poco más de estudio, más sobre el contenido, y este, no andar dando guías, una guía de diez preguntas, entonces el solo basa en esas preguntas. Ellos se acostumbran de que ya no estudian. No estudian el resto, solo esperando que uno dé la guía. Y solo estudian la guía. Saben que solo esas quince preguntas son las que van a salir allí.

⁹¹ Yo pienso que, que si yo les pongo una prueba grande, yo allí me estoy dando cuenta de todo lo que sabe el niño. ¿Verdad? Les pongo de varias..., de varios puntos allí en la prueba, y yo me voy dando cuenta, verdad. Pero si yo solamente pongo unos tres ejercicios así, o unas tres preguntitas, yo no estoy, yo, para mí no queda satisfactoria porque yo lo digo, tal vez se lo aprendió. ¿Y lo otro?

⁹² Ahora, también, sinceramente, yo le digo. Que a veces el niño no aprende cómo debería aprender, asimilar como debería aprender porque con la, ese sistema de evaluación, verdad, de que, em, bueno, más acumulado bueno es, pero luego, hay que tomar en cuenta si llegó diario, si hace tareas, cómo se comporta en clases (pause) todo eso, verdad.

⁹³ Es el sistema de evaluación para ayudar al niño, para que no haya (haiga) mucha repitentes. Para mí que eso, esa asistencia, eso no tiene nada que ver con el contenido. Para mí esa no tiene nada que ver con el contenido. Una cosa es llegar, y llegó y no hizo nada en clase. Llegó puntual, y no hizo nada en clases. Eso sucede. Entonces, que uno tiene que buscar la forma de ayudarle al niño para que el niño no se queda. Ahora está creando mucha irresponsabilidad.

their questions about how to enact the necessary (i.e., supervised) components. With no time designated to discuss policy changes, officials responded to teachers' questions in TEPCE gatherings by repeating what each percentage was (60/40) – often incorrectly – and a brief list of what each included, some briefer than others. The message was that teachers should understand the assessment paradigm shift upon receiving each mandate – and know how to put it into practice with their students. Those who did not understand immediately would over time as information was repeated, until they understood. This was what the MINED described as “reinforcing” and “strengthening” teacher knowledge in its annual assessment PD and monthly TEPCEs.

This left teachers to create their own understandings from existing information about formative and performance assessments. Most saw them as one package that included “grading students every day”⁹⁴ (common phrase) mostly regarding behavior, and grading student activities in the standard list (i.e., attendance, behavior, in-class work, homework). Educators made few distinctions between formative, performance and summative assessments because “they all measure a student’s learning”⁹⁵ (common phrase). The differences people understood was that the new assessments were shorter, more frequent and proctored as many times as each student needed to achieve a passing score. Teachers understood daily grading mostly in relation to student behavior, which they used as a threat when classrooms got loud and out of control, shouting out, “Remember, I’m grading you every day,” “I can fail you for your behavior today,” and “I will fail everyone today because of *Fulano*’s behavior”⁹⁶ (common phrases). Grading classwork daily did not make sense for several reasons. The only change the MINED approved in grade books was interim quizzes in addition to final exams. Teachers kept student attendance in a separate notebook as they always had and attendance was the record of in-class work for most teachers. Teachers graded behavior at the end of each quarter based on what they remembered; that did not require documentation. Upper elementary teachers graded a few of the almost daily in-class dictations of spelling and numbers names as in-class quizzes. Even though homework was meant to be graded, and teachers cited it as part of a students’ grade, by April students in the

⁹⁴ Calificando a los estudiantes todos los dias

⁹⁵ Todas miden lo que aprende el estudiante

⁹⁶ Recuerden, estoy calificandoles todos los dias. Les puedo aplazar por su comportamiento hoy. Voy a aplazar a toditos hoy por el mal comportamiento de Fulano.

schools I visited stopped bringing homework to school and teachers stopped checking it (though many still assigned it) because “no one did their homework”⁹⁷ (common phrase). No one graded in-class copying of text from the board to study at home which was the principal activity through the school day, every day because they would grade student learning of copied text on an upcoming test.

Teachers and family members aired their distaste for the new assessment mandates in many ways. One common theme was how different things were when they were students – and how much more they learned than their current students. The idea was clear: mandates like Murillo’s were ruining education, not teacher attitudes or motivation. Regalia, Ambrosia and several mothers and grandmothers remembered how they focused only on content, copying information onto huge poster boards and having to memorize it all. One grandmother shook her head as she told me, “These kids have it easy. When I went to school, we didn’t have notebooks. Teachers copied onto a blackboard and we had to memorize it that day.” Ambrosia remembered her experiences.

We as students were concerned and we studied all of that, all of it. Then, when we were going to take the exams, they didn’t give us a guide, but all we had copied, right, we had to study it all and from there they made the exams and they were pieces of paper like this (she holds her hands up to show at least double a normal sheet)... And that exam was only worth ten points. Ten points but it was like one hundred points!⁹⁸

All teachers said they learned the content better and faster than their students, declaring “In those times, one learned the content,” or “What I learned in those times I haven’t forgotten,” or “Look at these students who are always forgetting. I never forgot what I learned.”⁹⁹

Teachers loudly questioned why the government pressured for reinforcement and the new assessment strategies when automatic promotion was in place, and tended to view it as added pressure to pass all students. Officials presented and supervised each mandate as a separate entity, not as two complementary or related policies. “Between us,” Profe Pelucita

⁹⁷ ¡Nadie hizo sus tareas!

⁹⁸ Tenía sus beneficios, sus ventajas, porque nosotros como estudiantes nos preocupamos y estudiamos de todo aquello, de todo aquello. Después, cuando íbamos a hacer los, a hacer los exámenes, se llamaban en ese tiempo, no nos daban una guía, no nos daban diez preguntas para solo aprender diez preguntas, sino que, de todo lo que teníamos copiado, verdad, era de estudiar todo y de allí nos sacaban los exámenes y eran unas hojas así, no sé si conoce, se llamaban hojas así, verdad, así rayadito, y eran llenas. Y ese examen solo valía diez puntos. Pero diez puntos, pues, como (pause)... ¡cien puntos!

⁹⁹ En esos tiempos, uno aprendió el contenido. Lo que yo aprendí en esos tiempos a mí no se me olvida. Mire a estos estudiantes que siempre están olvidando. A mí nunca se me olvidó lo que aprendí en la escuela.

explained privately, “I don’t view the reinforcement well, as a demand that it be given Tuesday and Thursday...Because practically it’s telling the teachers to pass students to the next grade without knowing anything.”¹⁰⁰ To her and many colleagues, remediation was “a waste of time” and would not help students learn – which was why it was just pressure to pass students whether they learned or not. With remediation in every school, the government could blame teachers who did not pass students: the teacher was not doing her job. Numerous stories of pedagogic advisors demanding teachers change failing grades to passing reinforced this perception. Pelucita repeated an incident in which a pedagogic advisor told a colleague, “‘You have a lot of failing students,’ he said. Then he said, ‘Give them elemental’” [a passing grade between 60 and 75).¹⁰¹ All these stories involved a Municipal MINED pedagogic advisor insisting teachers inflate failing grades to passing with reminders like “You don’t want to get into trouble, right?” or “you don’t want to draw attention to yourself, do you?”¹⁰² Some outside educators expressed concern for teachers who refused to comply. “The order the teachers received implies passing all students. On the contrary, it would be the fault of the teachers, who are also questioned for not having an academic strategy that is capable of ensuring their students pass to the next grade without delays”¹⁰³ (Castillo, June 6, 2012, p. 1A). Through its enactment of both policies, the government released itself from any additional responsibility in helping teachers help students learn. The policy focus on raising pass rates over student learning was evident to many teachers and people outside the government – and part of strong disagreements with practices mandated within each policy.

Teacher understandings of remediation. Teachers understood remediation as a time and space at the end of the school day to repeat the morning’s lesson with students who were below grade level. This repetition was to occur in 30-60 minutes (or less) two days each

¹⁰⁰ Bueno, aquí pues entre nos, cómo dicen (laughs). Bueno, yo no, no veo bien eso del reforzamiento como una exigencia que den los martes y los jueves. Es una exigencia. Porque prácticamente están diciéndole al maestro que pase a los grados a los estudiantes sin saber nada. No lo veo viable.

¹⁰¹ Bueno, aquí pues entre nos, como dicen (laughs). Bueno, yo no, no veo bien eso del reforzamiento como una exigencia que den los martes y los jueves. Es una exigencia. Porque prácticamente están diciéndole al maestro que pase a los grados a los estudiantes sin saber nada. No lo veo viable, ¿Por qué? Porque incluso, no paso con mi sino yo lo escuche...Un técnico al maestro le dijo, ‘Lleva muchos aplazados,’ le dijo. Entonces le dijo, ‘Póngalos a elemental.’

¹⁰² No quieren problemas, ¿verdad? No quiere atraer la atención a si misma, ¿o si?

¹⁰³ Actualmente la orden que recibieron los docentes implica aprobar a todos los estudiantes. De lo contrario sería culpa de los maestros a quienes también se les cuestiona por no tener una estrategia académica que sea capaz de conseguir que sus alumnos promuevan al grado siguiente sin atrasos, afirmó la docente Lesbia Rodríguez, miembro de la Unidad Sindical Magisterial.

week with no no additional planning required or expected. Repetition of content was a common teaching and learning strategy in schooling. Curricular content repeated during the school year and across all elementary years. In the classroom, teachers repeated a handful of lessons in math to reinforce learning of “the four fundamental operations” (a common phrase to describe math objectives) and in language arts – for students to write letters correctly and neatly and to memorize grammar rules (mostly accentuation) and parts of speech. Teachers explained that repetition was important to learning “because it helps [the students], so they assimilate the content more. That’s what one hopes, one’s objective that they assimilate, that they learn.” She went on to explain that “they hear it again, and again, and again, and it’s like they are remembering when you tell them. They remember.”¹⁰⁴ Regalia agreed. “Repetition is so the children remember what has been given before...you have to be telling them, repeating, because they get to sixth grade, to high school, and they forget. That’s their problem...because they are given all that content.”¹⁰⁵ Despite widely-held commitment to repetition as necessary for learning, many teachers disagreed that repeating one lesson one more time to students during remediation would help them learn. Teachers questioned the effectiveness of redundancy for remediation, but were committed to its effectiveness during normal classroom hours and in the curriculum.

Teachers and MINED officials beliefs about learning (mentioned above) included the critical action of students studying to learn academic content and skills at home. Remediation did not enforce student self-learning which was a major teacher critique of the policy. Teachers strongly believed that students did not learn or they forgot information because “they do not study” (an almost daily complaint). This arose in conversations with colleagues, students, parents and was documented in writing in monthly TEPCE evaluations. “If they do not touch their notebook or anything, they forget. Because it’s true. If they do not review things over and over, they forget” Profe Murella told me. She then added: “It’s like if you put

¹⁰⁴ Les ayuda a ellos, pues, para que lo asimilen más, el contenido. Es lo que uno espera, el objetivo de uno, pues, que ellos asimilen, que ellos aprendan... lo escuchan otra vez, y otra vez y otra vez. Cómo que se van acordando cuando se les dice uno. Allí van recordando.

¹⁰⁵ Es falta de estudio. Porque fíjense que en, en, hay mucho contenido que se dan en, en casi en todos los grados. Los niños como que no los ponen mente. Es falta de estudio, porque esa repetición es para que los niños vayan recordando lo que se ha dado anteriormente. PERO ELLOS no le ponen mente. Por eso es que haya ese problema. Falta de estudio.

something away and then you forget it and you never find it again.”¹⁰⁶ This was a literal example in which students put their notebooks away, did not review them, and forgot the information they had written inside. Studying at home was part of the memorization process to assimilate and learn content.

Remediation reinforced beliefs about teaching to the group because students learned as a group in similar ways in the same period of time. MINED officials talked about it as a whole group effort because all the children were below grade level. Remediation was not a time and space to respond to individual students’ needs. Not all teachers cited individual attention as a necessary part of teaching. The few teachers who cited one-on-one time as critical to individual student learning all said they had enough time to address individual needs during normal class time when other students were working.

Using understandings to decide on practices. “In education, they tell us we have to do this and that – and we have to do it,”¹⁰⁷ Profe Liria lamented. Only a small minority of teachers complied 100% with MINED policies. Liria and many of her colleagues found creative ways to comply. This effort to maneuver the proceduralization and supervision of weak policies – like remediation and assessment – created a challenging socio-professional environment. Most teachers complied with policies to a point while they simultaneously mitigated negative effects they felt the policies created in their classrooms and schools.

How are they going to tell me that I pass a student who doesn’t know [the content]? I don’t view that well...practically, they are demanding teachers that, that they pass the student... [In the following grade] the teacher has a lot of failing students who received a [passing] grade of 60, and that does not help the teacher.¹⁰⁸

Most teachers did not comply 100% with automatic promotion. They wrestled with who to pass and who not to pass, and negotiated constant pressures from officials, parents and community leaders. The two most common public justifications teachers gave for not passing

¹⁰⁶ Es como que mire. Si ellos no vuelven a tocar su cuaderno ni nada, se olvida. Porque es cierto. Si ellos no vuelven a revisar una cosa una tras otra y otra vez, se le olvida. Como si usted guarde algo y después se le olvido y no vuelve a encontrar. Por eso les digo yo en las vacaciones porque no a, a, repasar algo, a estudiar.

¹⁰⁷ En educación nos dicen que tenemos que hacer tal cosa y tal cosa, y tenemos que hacerlo ni modo.

¹⁰⁸ ¿Cómo me van a decir a mí que pase a un estudiante que no sabe? No lo veo bien...prácticamente están exigiéndole al maestro eso, que le pase al estudiante. Porque si un maestro se siente con exigencia, si yo no paso a un estudiante yo tengo que trabajar, incluso en tiempo de vacaciones al maestro que se le queda estudiantes tiene que ir a la aula de clases a dar clase. Entonces lo ve como una exigencia al maestro. Entonces, muchos maestros optan devolviendo a la, a la, a la, a la, lo que estaba hablando, le dijo un asesor pedagógico, ‘Pásalos como elemental,’ le dice...El maestro tiene bastantes aplazados que recibieron una calificación de 60, y eso no sirve al maestro.

a student was irregular and low attendance, and consistent failure on multiple attempts for every exam. Two common reasons teachers shared in private were student behavior and parent pressure. Many teachers admitted that they inflated grades to pass students who had no serious behavior issues or were less willing to inflate for those who were “insolent” and “stubborn” or otherwise disrespectful. They also did not fail a student if the parent did not agree that their child repeat the grade. All teachers admitted to inflating grades for certain students. Sandinista Youth passed students in vacation remediation for being members of the Sandinista Party (Bermudez, 2012). Pedagogic advisors pressured them to not have too many students fail the year, and the pressure increased each grading quarter.

Conflicts and mixed messaging about grade inflation and the absolute discomfort most teachers felt exploded at a TEPCE workshop following a teacher’s report on the Municipal Delegate’s semester report on education in the municipality. The last theme of the report back was “the importance of honesty.” The Delegate had declared “that many of us are not being honest.”¹⁰⁹ She demanded through her spokespeople that “this has to change” and gave examples. “She talked about data teachers submit that is not accurate, teachers saying they have planned when they have not, teachers teaching only two hours a day of classes and saying they are teaching a full day.” Later, during the small group evaluation, Profe Dinora shared with her colleagues how she had presented her report cards to the Municipal MINED offices and the pedagogic advisor had refused to accept them, demanding that she first change the grades because “there’s a problem.”

When I took the grade sheets, one was for a student with 56, and he told me, ‘Put 60 there. You can’t have that number there.’ They tell you to put 60 and nothing less. They basically are telling us, ‘Don’t say the truth.’ And then here, in the TEPCE, they tell us we are dishonest and we have to tell the truth!¹¹⁰

More than a handful of teachers nodded and began to talk at the same time. I heard several say, “That’s true!” and “That same thing happened to me!” around the group. “The pedagogic advisors...ask, ‘Why did you put that?’ Or even worse, they say, ‘You can’t put

¹⁰⁹ La importancia de la honestidad...que muchos de nosotros los maestros no estamos siendo honestos.

¹¹⁰ Cuando lleve los boletines, uno tenia 56, y el me dijo, Ponga 60 alli. No puedes tener ese numero alli.” Te dicen poner 60 y nada menos. Basicamente, estan diciendo, “No decir la verdad.” Y despues aqui, en el TEPCE, nos dicen que somos deshonestos ¡y tenemos que decir la verdad!

that,’ when the grade is less than 60.”¹¹¹ It was clear MINED officials demanded teachers change grades regularly. Liria admitted that she sometimes gave a student a 60 who had only earned a 40 “to avoid complications.” Dinora agreed: “It makes you scared to put the correct numbers.”¹¹²

Teachers used collegial spaces like TEPCEs and their informal networks of support to share tensions and thoughts about the MINED’s contradictory messaging, and how to respond. They weighed when they could rely on support from the Municipal MINED leadership and when they could not, when they could publicly express exasperations and when to remain quiet, when to fully comply and when to fudge a little or a lot. Fausto – the nucleus coordinator for all multigrade member schools – had listened to the conversation above and vehemently disagreed. “I’ve never been scared to put the right numbers,” he loudly declared. “I always put exactly what they are. Right now I have 11 fifth graders. Only four are passing. I put that in my report. I put exactly that.”¹¹³ Fausto had proven his loyalty to Ortega and the Sandinista Project since the 1970s. He could submit report cards with 36% of his students failing and no one would question him. The teachers in the group became quiet. One teacher raised another topic and the group left the contentious issue hanging in the air. Fausto walked away. He had insisted teachers not follow orders from their Municipal supervisors, something they could not do without threatening their jobs. Teachers had to negotiate when to be honest or dishonest and how to comply or not comply based on foreseeable consequences. Similar to the “honesty” messaging in the TEPCE, the MINED regularly put teachers in positions where they could not fully comply with one mandate without negatively affecting their compliance with another, or where they were chastised for behaving in some way in one context and then ordered to do exactly that same behavior in another. With no room for discussion in formal MINED-defined spaces, teachers created informal spaces to negotiate conflicts (i.e., being punished).

A major part of these negotiations was around the cloud of threats and potential punishments MINED officials relied upon as incentives for teacher compliance, including a

¹¹¹ Los asesores [pedagógicos] preguntan, “¿Por que pusiste eso?” o aún más pero dicen, “No pueden poner eso” cuando la calificación es menos de 60.

¹¹² Te da miedo entrar los números [i.e., las calificaciones] correctas.

¹¹³ Nunca he tenido miedo poner los números correctos. Yo siempre pongo exactamente así como son. Ahorita tengo once estudiantes en quinto [grado]. Solo cuatro están pasando. Yo pongo eso en mi informe. Pongo exactamente eso.

fear of losing their job. Ambrosia gave her students study guides despite vehemently disagreeing with them, and believing they negatively affected student learning. She explained that if a pedagogic advisor or Delegate found out that she gave her students a longer test “the first thing is he complains and demands, ‘Why is it so long? That I should be helping the child. That I should give a few exercises in agreement with the objectives.’” She felt strongly there was no way to justify any changes to a MINED mandate like that. “No, they say we are not obeying the orientations. That we are like (pause), we have gone beyond what they tell us.”¹¹⁴ All teachers expressed similar sentiments.

Teachers implemented remediation in different ways depending on different understandings and beliefs. For example, almost everyone adapted the mandated remediation schedule from 60 minutes to between 5 and 35 minutes depending on the day or week. This decision contributed to all children losing instructional days from those at grade level who were dismissed early to those below grade level who received less than half to almost none of the mandated remediation time. Ambrosia announced in the school assembly one morning that many of her students began to skip Tuesday and Thursday altogether to avoid staying after in remediation. If they continued skipping two days each week on a regular basis, she was going to have to fail them – the exact opposite effect of what the policy intended.

Teachers spoke privately about how they felt they could not include all their students who were below grade level in remediation. Many feared a public reprimand or harsher punishment. “If we put all our students on the list,” Reina confided, “they will say we’re not doing our job.”¹¹⁵ Others reduced the remediated group to lessen the load of the weekly reporting requirement. Others claimed they could only attend a small group to reduce chaos in the remediation classroom. Some did not include students who had inconsistent attendance during normal classtime. In all four cases, teachers created expanded criteria outside of the MINED’s order to include all children who were below grade level. In each classroom I observed, a handful or more children did not receive needed remediation. (Every year teachers passed certain students who had not met minimum requirements under the same reasoning.) Teachers dismissed children below grade level who were not on their list an hour

¹¹⁴ Si me encuentran lo primero es que me van a reclamar, ¿de por qué tan largo es? Que el niño se le debe ayudar. Que le debe dar, este, ejercicios pocos, de acuerdo, si, al, a los objetivos. No. Dicen que no estamos acatando las orientaciones. Que estamos como..., más allá, pues, de lo que ellos dicen.

¹¹⁵ Si ponemos a todos [los estudiantes] en la lista, van a decir que no estamos haciendo nuestro trabajo.

early, making them lose more instructional time than before the policy went into effect. In these and other ways, a large number of students lost instructional time due to policies professed to increase learning opportunities.

How teachers used the five to thirty-five minutes of remediation with five to ten students varied considerably. Some students swept and mopped the classroom and outside corridors. Profe Regalia usually had an over-age second grade student teach the younger first graders. Liberally swinging the one meter wooden ruler above the heads of her younger counterparts, she yelled out syllables and syllable combinations while intermittently yelling at a student or the entire group, “Pay attention!” “Stop talking!” “Sit down!” or “Read! In chorus!”¹¹⁶ – just as she had seen Profe Regalia do during the regular school day. Profe Pelucita had students review what they had written in their notebooks that day quietly at their desks; when they finished, often within 3-10 minutes, she dismissed them. Profe Ambrosia taught the same lesson she had taught in the morning if students sat in their desks. If her students were unruly, she sent them home. “I won’t struggle with their insolence during remediation,”¹¹⁷ she explained. Profe Adriana admitted that among her San Jose High School teachers “we have had weaknesses because we are not working it as we should.”¹¹⁸ Most of her teachers outright refused to implement the remediation program. She said it would be a long-term process to get it up and running.

MINED supervision of remediation focused on two measurable logistics: enactment of the schedule overseen by each principal and submission of individual weekly written reports. As long as teachers and entire schools complied with these two requirements, the government deemed remediation a success. There was no discussion about how it was enacted, challenges encountered, successes or how to measure results, i.e. student learning. The latter would occur through repetition and pass rates (with no mention of automatic promotion). Logistical conflicts arose immediately. In El Roble, teachers requested extra funds for food since students were used to going home earlier and eating. “The kids are hungry by 1pm,” Fausto declared, “and they can’t focus when they’re hungry.”¹¹⁹ No funds were forthcoming. Weeks later, Ambrosia complained that student attendance went down

¹¹⁶ ¡Pongan atencion! ¡Dejen de hablar! ¡Sientense! ¡Leen! ¡En coro!

¹¹⁷ No voy a luchar con su insolencia durante refuerzo.

¹¹⁸ Hemos tenido debilidades porque no lo estamos trabajando como se debe.

¹¹⁹ Los chavalos ya tienen hambre a la una y no pueden enfocar cuando tienen hambre.

Tuesdays and Thursdays because, students and parents told her, they did not want to stay until 1pm. “Neither do teachers,” she muttered under her breath.

A few teachers refused to implement remediation citing their strong beliefs that they did their part during normal school hours. Reina explained her decision to her colleagues:

I want to talk about *reforzamiento*, because I feel strongly that if the teacher dedicates the complete school schedule to her teaching, that no one loses hours and they dedicate the complete number of hours to teaching, not losing any at all, we have relatively few students – a maximum of 20-25 children in our classes (she had 14-16 last year) – at the end of the year, if we really use all the teaching time available, I don’t see why we need *reforzamiento*. I don’t think we do, because we should have completed our job in the time allotted.¹²⁰

Teachers nodded vigorously in agreement as she spoke. Most elementary classrooms had a majority of students under grade level, especially in math or language arts. Teachers who argued against remediation claimed that they did their job (“I do my part”), and students who were not at or above grade level did not learn for reasons outside a teacher’s control. There were five principal reasons, all accepted by the MINED during monthly evaluations: They had little to no interest in school, learning or learning the content; they forgot what they had been taught; they did not study outside of class (and families did not help); they did not pay attention in class; they missed class on a regular basis due to agricultural work, family mobility or illness. Extra reinforcement classes – even if it meant adhering more closely to the 5-hour class schedule – would not work because they did not address these dynamics and ultimate reasons behind low student performance. Since these themes were prevalent throughout the school day and year in teacher conversations and teacher-student interactions, I briefly look at each one below.

Student interest. One very common teacher criticism of students – and a constant justification for their not learning in school – was lack of interest. Ambrosia, like many colleagues, attributed lack of interest exclusively to students. She struggled to find the words and summed up her thoughts by saying, “It’s like little interest, like he doesn’t take it,

¹²⁰ Yo quiero hablar de reforzamiento, porque me siento con convicción que si una Profesora dedica el horario escolar completo a la enseñanza, que nadie pierde horas y dedica la totalidad de horas a la enseñanza, que no pierden ni una, tenemos pocos estudiantes relativamente, un máximo de 20-25 estudiantes en nuestras aulas (TR note: ella tenía 14-16 in 2012), entonces al fin de año, si verdaderamente utilizamos todito el tiempo disponible, no veo por que necesitaríamos reforzamiento. No creo que lo necesitamos porque deberíamos haber cumplido nuestro trabajo en el tiempo estipulado.

like...how would I say? Little interest.” She expanded upon her idea with the following example.

Because maybe in the moment they do the work. One evaluates it, what they are doing. In two, three days they no longer know the words, and which are *agudas* and where they are accented...as if the teacher has not done anything (pause) and that’s how they are when they pass to the next grade.¹²¹

Student lack of interest led to forgetting, no matter what a teacher did. Regalia agreed.

Look, if I have all the interest in raising their interest and, but they aren’t interested? It’s like Profe Ambrosia said to Profe Fausto [in School Assembly that morning]. ‘Look, Profe. I stay one hour after, she says, giving the class. We stay, giving the hour. But the kids don’t want to! The day we do reinforcement they don’t show...they say, ‘Ah, today we won’t go because we have reinforcement and we’re going until one.’ That’s what they say. They’re not interested!’¹²²

If students showed no interest, the teachers could prepare and stay the extra time but it would be for naught.

Profe Adriana was the only educator who mentioned that lack of student interest might be related to “classes that don’t motivate them,” intimating a teacher’s shared responsibility in raising student interest. Her thoughts danced between the two ideas and she placed most emphasis interest being each student’s responsibility. She worried that students who had “problems with academic performance” entered a downward spiral in which once they “start losing enthusiasm, motivation” and they spiral to the point where “they lose interest completely, in doing well, in getting ahead and putting in effort.” She also touched on youth having few if any future goals as limiting their learning. “There are kids who don’t have goals, um, planned goals, of how to get ahead. Many times it’s because of lack of interest, interest from the student.”¹²³ Lack of interest led to lower student performance

¹²¹ Como que, no, como que lo toma como, como por, para (pausa), ¿Cómo dijera? Como poco interés, pues. Porque tal vez ellos en el momento ellos hacen el trabajo. Uno lo evalúa lo que está haciendo. En dos, tres días ya no saben las palabras y cuales son agudas, donde se acentúa. Por ejemplo ayer, yo les recordaba y eso me hizo recordar cuando son las palabras agudas, cuando se acentúa, por que se acentúa y todo eso,... pregúntale cómo que no, cómo que el maestro no le ha hecho nada... y así pasan al siguiente grado.

¹²² Yo tengo todo el interés en levantarlo [el interés] y, ¿pero ellos no tienen interés? Como le pasa a la Profesora Ambrosia, que le dice al Profesor Fausto [en la Asamblea esa mañana], ‘Mire, Profe. Yo me quedo una hora después,’ le dice, ‘dando la clase.’ Nos quedamos, pues, dando una hora. ¡Pero no quieren los chavalos! El día que lleva reforzamiento no llegan, ¿verdad? Lunes y miércoles, que queda de reforzamiento, no llegan, porque ellos dicen, ‘Ah, hoy no vamos a ir porque tenemos reforzamiento y vamos a estar hasta la una.’ Así dicen. ¡No tienen interés!

¹²³ Las clases no les motivan. Hay problemas de rendimiento académico. Son chavalos y chavalas que ya tienen muchos años de estar repitiendo, son repitentes, reincidentes, entonces es como pierden el entusiasmo, la

which led to repeating a grade at least once and sometimes more. “Generally, this type of student who has repeated it’s like (she lowers her voice) they aren’t motivated.” She then blamed students who dropped out of school early and the parents who let them. After “many years of repeating, they drop out.”¹²⁴ At the same time, she admitted that the MINED, administrators and teachers “haven’t been giving it the accompaniment we should to see what truly are the causes” of lack of interest and early drop-out.

We are worried about other motives that also are related, the violence, abandonment [of family]. They are factors that are related to low academic performance, but we have neglected the student motivation part. We have neglected it a lot and that is where we return to see the cycle that continues to repeat itself.¹²⁵

As the only educator I spoke with over two years who mentioned institutional and teacher responsibility for student interest, Adriana’s unusual perspective highlighted how unconventional it was – and how powerful beliefs were that student interest rested on the student alone.

Student forgetting. Liria described student forgetting as what a teacher does going up in smoke in a student’s brain. “The more one explains, that one gives [the content], it’s like, what happened? A cloud of gas, of smoke, for them.”¹²⁶ Pelucita described remembering and forgetting as “depending on the capacity of the mentality, because there are children who learn more in the short term and others more in the long term.”¹²⁷ She went on to refer to a document she had read about minds or memories (“I don’t remember it well”) being short and long term and how “we are all so different...so there are minds, memory, that retain for

motivación y se tiene que, se retiran. Pierden interés completamente, en hacer su trabajo bien, en salir adelante, en poner su esfuerzo... Hay chavalos que no tienen metas, eh, metas trazadas verdad, de, de salir adelante, incluso, pues, a veces por las condiciones que tienen. Muchas veces por falta de interés, verdad, interés del estudiante.

¹²⁴ Generalmente este tipo de estudiante con eh, con repitencia, como que, (lowers voice) no estan motivados. Despues de muchos anos de repitencia, se ven obligados retirarse en el año, ¿por qué? Por bajo rendimiento. Y ellos pueden decir, ‘Ya no voy a hacer nada. Hasta aquí,’ y se retiran.

¹²⁵ Muchas veces la parte medular, es cierto que hay problemas familiares, de comportamientos de varios indoles, pero la parte academica la estamos descuidando y si no le damos atención a los chavalos que tienen problemas académicos. No nos hemos venido dándolo un acompañamiento debido para ver verdaderamente cuales son esas causas. Sino nos preocupamos por otros motivos, a veces por, que también inciden, la violencia, el abandono. Son factores que inciden en el bajo rendimiento. Pero también la parte de la motivación hemos descuidado. Lo hemos descuidado bastante y allí es donde volvemos a que ese ciclo se vuelve a repetir.

¹²⁶ Que uno por más que lo explique, que los dé... como ¿Qué pasó? Una nube de, de, de gas, de humo para ellos.

¹²⁷ Es que depende de la capacidad de la, de, de, de la mentalidad porque hay unos niños que aprenden a más corto plazo y otros a más largo plazo, o también yo he leído un documento, que hay, bueno, que hay dice, que hay mente, memoria, no sé cómo es que no recuerdo bien pero que hay unas que la tienen a corto plazo y otros a largo plazo.

the long-term and others that retain in the short-term...I'm just remembering that that could be a solution [to retention]."¹²⁸ For Pelucita, those who had long-term memory remembered the content for a long time and those who had short-term memory did not. Teachers had to reinforce their teaching and repeat content over and over for those with short-term memory.

Weak to no study habits outside of class. In TEPCE evaluations and classroom behavior talks, teachers always included their belief that students did not learn because "they do not study" (common phrase). Teachers remembered themselves as "very studious," with Regalia remembering how "everything I learned in primary school I did not forget. Those *agudas* words, those little things that I give [my students], I have not forgotten them."¹²⁹ She repeated this last phrase three times. Murella related not studying to constant challenges of student forgetting. "What one learns in the cradle is never forgotten...because they have to learn it well, and some don't learn it well. They don't study."¹³⁰ Most Monday mornings, Ambrosia and Liria accused their students of not having studied and upon their return from vacations. "If they don't touch their notebook or anything, they forget," Liria explained. "That's why I tell them that during vacation to go over everything, to study."¹³¹

Teachers accused family members of failing their children, and students failing themselves. This was part of the shared responsibility model. Family members and students were the obvious weak link in many households. Reina complained that one of her second graders who still could not read most syllable combinations had older siblings and parents who could help her, "they just refuse." Fausto yelled in School Assembly one morning that too many families "preferred to galavant outside the community" than attend to their children's health, well-being and education. Pridi denounced most mothers as "fresh" (Nicaraguan slang for being manipulative and even offensive in words and deeds) and not caring about their children's education. Stories abounded of parents who didn't send their children to school each day, others who didn't send them bathed or with their notebooks, and

¹²⁸ Entonces, usted sabe que el cuerpo humano es, somos tan diferentes. Entonces, la, es la retención. Hay, hay mentes, memoria, pues, que retienen a largo plazo y hay otros que no retienen a corto plazo. Yo por lo menos ahorita que estoy recordando eso podría ser una salida a eso.

¹²⁹ Todo lo que estudié en primaria no se me olvidó. Esas palabras agudas, todas las cositas que doy [a mis estudiantes], a mi no se me olvidó nada.

¹³⁰ le digo yo, le digo el dicho que dice, lo que se aprende en la cuna nunca se olvide. Lo que se aprende en la cuna nunca se olvida, les digo yo. Porque es cierto. Porque tiene que aprenderlo bien, y unos no aprenden bien, les digo yo. No estudian.

¹³¹ Por eso les digo que durante la vacación tienen que revisar todo, estudiar.

most who did not ensure their children did their homework. Teachers shared stories with each other, regaled students in the classroom and raised their voices at group parent meetings. It was a family responsibility to help children learn content in the afternoon after classes and during vacations, and most families were not fulfilling that responsibility. Teachers, in contrast, worked hard during the regular school year, planning each afternoon, coming to school each day ready to teach content, returning home to plan.

Study and learning behaviors during class. For many teachers, Murillo and MINED officials implied that assessment and reinforcement policies were needed because of some fault of teachers. Upper grade elementary school teachers made similar implications about their lower grade colleagues. Regalia accused Fausto of being inaccurate when he said in School Assembly that his fifth graders had not learned basic math and some could not read. She railed against his insinuations that she had not taught them well the previous year.

What didn't I do! I did amazing things...but they don't study. They didn't even do homework...they never learned [the content]. So what am I to do with those children? What can a teacher do if a child does not study? And what do they say about the teacher? That the teacher doesn't know anything, that the teacher doesn't teach, and it's them that don't study!¹³²

Teachers facilitated the information again and again, following MINED orientations and timelines, following curricular guidelines. Students did not pay attention. They were “insolent” and “stubborn,” unwilling to learn, and unwilling to do their work in the classroom. Complaints abounded about student behavior and attitudes: they did not come to learn, they came only to play, they often were distracted, they rough-housed and fought. Many teachers complained that with International Children's Rights agreements Nicaragua signed in the 1990s, they could no longer use physical punishments to keep students under control – even though all still did.

Many teachers insisted that students were usually at fault for not learning. “Even though one prepares and everything, the children don't let you [instruct], so sometimes we have that kind of difficulty,” Ambrosia explained.

That happens to me. Sometimes I make the plan, I search in a book, in another book and I develop the plan. When I get to class, it's difficult for them to understand well.

¹³² ¡QUE no hacía yo! Yo hacía maravillas, pero mire, no estudian. Ni las tareas hacían. Nunca se las aprendían. Y yo, ¿qué, qué voy a hacer con estos niños? (pause) Porque mire, ¿qué puede hacer un maestro si un niño no estudia? Ahora. ¿Qué dicen del maestro? Que el maestro no sabe nada, que el maestro no enseña, y son ellos que no estudian.

Why? Due to the exact same, the, the, what do you call it? The lack of discipline, lack of discipline in the classroom.¹³³

Regalia reiterated that even when teachers taught, students did not learn because of their classroom behaviors – which did not change during remediation.

When I was explaining at the blackboard [the content]...I got bored asking them so many questions! And some didn't even turn around to look, looking away somewhere else. Or heads down. And I would shout out, sounding the ruler, 'Look! Turn around and look! Come up to the board to locate the numbers.' And when they came up they couldn't do it...they didn't participate. That is the problem.¹³⁴

She and others reminded me that "there is a lot of content that is given in, in almost all grades. The kids, it's like they don't pay much mind to it."¹³⁵ Ambrosia used the same words of how "in many cases it's like it's the child that does not pay much mind."¹³⁶ Challenging in-class behaviors were present during reinforcement classes and some were worse because it was the end of a long school day and most everyone wanted to get home.

Adriana and Fausto – both local MINED officials – were the most expressive with me in critiquing how their schools, the MINED and teachers in general contributed to low student performance and learning. While they usually joined the common chorus of blaming students and their families for weak learning outcomes, both principals had enough clout in their positions of leadership to voice critiques privately and not worry about repercussions. Adriana critiqued teachers for lack of motivation, indifferent attitudes, being comfortable with "traditional" strategies of dictation and memorization, and using "strategies in the classroom... directed at the entire group," and not "individualized to the student who has the most problems."

So, reinforcement is directed at whom? To students who are at an initial learning level with low academic performance. We have to improve in that sense. To try,

¹³³ Pero aunque uno se prepara y todo, verdad y los niños no lo deja, entonces a veces tenemos, allí está la dificultad. Eso pasa a mí. A veces me pongo a hacer el plan, busco en un libro, en otro libro, y desarrollo el plan. A la hora de llegar a la clase, difícil, difícilmente para que ellos me comprendan bien. ¿Por qué? Por lo mismo de la, la, ¿cómo se llama? La indisciplina, indisciplina en el aula.

¹³⁴ Mire, cuando yo estaba explicando en la pizarra como se coloca los números decimales, ¿Cuál es la parte entera? ¿Cuál es la parte decimal? Cooooo no aburría yo diciéndoles. Y fíjese que no volteaba ni a verla, viendo para otro lado, mire. O agachado. Y diciéndole, yo sonaba la regla, '¡A ver! ¡Voltean a ver! ¿Cómo se colocan estos números? Pasan a la pizarra a colocarme los números.' Y cuando lo pasaron no podían. Y si uno les hacía preguntas. Y yo les hacía muuuuuchas preguntas, y no participaron. Ese es el problema.

¹³⁵ Hay mucho contenido que se da en casi todos los grados. Pero los chavalos y chavalas, es como que no ponen mente, no ponen atención, no estudian.

¹³⁶ En muchos casos cómo que es que el niño tampoco, que no le pone como mucha mente.

maybe not in its totality, but to rescue the great majority of kids that have that kind of problema [of low academic performance].¹³⁷

Fausto was more critical and more specific in his criticisms of colleagues. He complained about teachers' use of the same lessons, same words and even the same examples every year without ensuring student understanding. "If I use the same word, the same words that are repetitive, and I won't leave them, that those repetitive words are the only ones they all will be using in that [lesson], then I will never leave that role [of transmitting information to students]." He likened that kind of teaching, which he and Adriana attributed to most teachers, to a snake "that never uncoils and never lifts up its head, and doesn't realize it's in danger of dying"¹³⁸. Like the snake, many teachers had no idea their repetitive lessons with the same words contributed to students not learning. They were simply following instructions. But Fausto insisted they had to "do an infinite number of activities" instead. "Students will fail if we just tell them, 'Dictation! Classify them in agudas, graves and esdrújulas.'" Teachers repeated word dictation and classification exercise throughout the school year, every year. If it was the lesson on Tuesdays or Thursdays, teachers would repeat it one more time during remediation at the end of the day. Despite this criticism, repeating that lesson was what the MINED had approved. No one was trained in doing "an infinite number of activities" and material resources were extremely limited.

Adriana's and Fausto's critiques highlighted important aspects of education quality. They credited teachers with knowledge most did not have, that the MINED did not provide, as if it were simple or straightforward to become more autonomous and creative even as the socio-professional environment did not encourage this in any way other than discourse. I finish this section on the teachers' socio-professional setting by describing two aspects of quality education officials and teachers believed to be critical to their practice: Teacher knowledge and beliefs according to their preparation and ongoing professional development,

¹³⁷ Es decir, los maestros implementan estrategias de clase, estrategias en el aula de clase, pero esas estrategias van dirigidas a todo el grupo. No va, no va individualizada al que tiene los problemas mayores. Entonces, en el reforzamiento se va dirigido a quienes? A estudiantes que van en un aprendizaje inicial de bajo rendimiento academico. Asi también tenemos que mejorar, mejorar en ese sentido. Para tratar, verdad, tal vez no en su totalidad pero de rescatar a una gran mayoría de niños que tienen ese tipo de problema.

¹³⁸ Pero si yo con la misma palabra y las mismas palabras son repetitivas, y no voy a salir de ellos, que esas palabras repetitivas son las únicas que van a estar usando en eso, entonces no voy a salir nunca de ese rol. Allí voy a mantener. Como la culebra que nunca se desenrolla y nunca saca la cabeza, no se da cuenta que está en peligro de muerte.

and the quality and relevance of curricular materials and their use. Since the idea of education quality was still in its nascent stages, I first explain the shift from access to quality in general and how Nicaraguan educators understood the term.

Prioritizing quality over access. Internationally, efforts to ensure everyone's right to an education "evolved from an almost exclusive focus on schooling to a concern for the learning actually acquired by children and young people. This has placed education quality at the heart of the agenda" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 92). As they developed indicators for measuring quality, international policy makers moved away "from a focus on the necessary inputs for education provision (infrastructure, materials, and length of schooling) towards how to make use of school and the academic results of students. The focus on learning is essential" (p. 92). Rather than a narrow focus on access (including repetition, survival, promotion, graduation and drop-out rates), countries had to analyze and measure teaching-learning processes, learning assessments, and how to use data correctly (UNESCO, 2015).

The international push for "quality education" harkened back to the 1990's push for "constructivism." Decades later, the term "constructivism" was ubiquitous in Central American schooling but understanding was cursory: constructivism had been mandated by international agencies to receive funding but they had provided no training, space for discussion or full understanding of constructivism within each country. National Departments of Education did not embed constructivist principles in teacher preparation, PD or curriculum because definitions were vague. With little institutional understanding of constructivism, it could not become an integral part of classroom practice. Instead, teachers and MINED officials used the term frequently in discourse and continued to use behaviorist foundations in practice. Reminders about constructivism compared it to the evils of "traditional, memoristic" (behaviorist) education rather than defining constructivism itself. Understandings remained tenuous and reduced to overworked slogans (i.e., learn by doing, use student experiences). The soon-to-be-mandated "education quality" had no clear meaning or definition.

Nicaraguans spoke of education quality constantly in sweeping generic terms (like "relevant" and "quality") and by describing what it was not. "It's not enough to have a school where girls and boys go, sit down in a classroom and get a diploma, or for them to graduate from university. What's needed is relevant, quality education" (Vijil, 2008). Others described

the evils of the existing low quality schooling (Cáceres, 2014) with little discussion about what high quality could look like or how to get from low to high.

The education in today's Nicaragua is of such low quality that instead of helping us get out of poverty and overcome the lack of equity, it's actually reproducing poverty and inequality. Because with so few people well educated and so many badly educated, we're feeding the inequity of a society where a few have many opportunities and many have none at all. For a long time now we've been told that education is an instrument for social mobility, to help people get ahead and improve their lives and communities. But in today's Nicaragua education just isn't doing that. (Vijil, 2008)

These routine accounts accompanied by disturbing statistics showing stagnation or declines in performance, rarely offered specific solutions or realistic alternatives.

The Ortega government enthusiastically embraced education quality and claimed improvements in broad, unsubstantiated generalities like, "In Education...we have achieved an enormous leap of historic quality" (Consejo de Comunicación, 2014, n.p.). Since the government linked education quality with its work towards equity in society, improving the quality of life and development of the person and country, it celebrated education quality with economic and basic services improvements. When the government focused on schooling, it reminded the public that "Education quality depends on everyone, teachers as much as students, parents" and that "concrete actions to elevate education quality" were necessary because "education quality is multifactorial" (MINED INFORMA, April 2013). Government examples of improving education quality included "knowledge chats" among teachers (PD) that "updated" (MINED INFORMA, April 2013), "reinforced" (MINED INFORMA, November 2013) or "strengthened" (MINED INFORMA, August 2013) teacher knowledge. One single training with primary and secondary teachers in one municipality was a concrete effort towards quality and evidence of the government's commitment to increasing quality in schooling. Measurements remained the same: university admission exam results, enrollment and retention rates, and teacher participation in PD. Adriana provided a common list, with a teacher twist:

In Nicaragua, education quality refers precisely to improving repetition rates, the quality of learning, the quality of evaluation processes because we began talking about the process of evaluation, and really many of us don't practice it like it is...we

have stayed in the memoristic part, in the reproduction part, only evaluating the written part, but we don't go giving that follow-up to the child.¹³⁹

She continued her critique by pointing to how teachers don't use the curricular achievement indicators "which help me have a better visualization of what I am going to evaluate."

The government's inattention and inability to evaluate and measure education policies, programs and outcomes (like student learning) were roundly criticized and even cited by the government in its *Strategic Education Plan 2011-2015* (Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, 2011). Efforts towards education quality required systematic collection and analysis of data to inform the conversation. Without data, the education quality debate became a battle of perceptions and stories that tended to fall along political party lines. Meanwhile, international organizations "expanded the definition of quality to address desirable characteristics of learners, processes, facilities, learning materials, content, governance and management, and learning outcomes" (UNESCO, 2015b, p. 189). I briefly look at aspects of the teachers in this study and MINED officials highlighted as most important to them and their work to improve education quality.

Teacher preparation and professional development (PD). Teachers regularly complained about weaknesses in their teacher preparation^{lvi} and how professional development^{lvii} was not targeted to their needs. They cited weaknesses in their content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Pelucita described her preparation:

It was like a refresher course of high school repeating content one more time, treating us like a student, teaching directly, for example, the rule of three I saw in high school and in primary. I think in the Normal [School] we should be going to know different methodological strategies and not as a student that arrives to the classroom.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ En Nicaragua, la calidad educativa está referida precisamente a eso, pues – a mejorar los índices de repitencia, la calidad de los aprendizajes, en la calidad en los procesos de la evaluación porque en un inicio hablamos de la evaluación del proceso, y realmente la evaluación del proceso muchos no la practicamos como es, sino como dije al inicio, nos hemos quedado en la parte memorística, en la parte de reproducción, solo evaluamos la parte escrita, pero no le vamos dando ese seguimiento al chavalo, en cuanto a cómo evaluamos a cada uno de los indicadores, de la clase de los indicadores englobadores, que son los que me permiten tener la mayor visualización sobre lo que voy a evaluar.

¹⁴⁰ Es como una refrescamiento de la, de la secundaria en la Normal, repitiendo el contenido una vez mas, tratándonos como un estudiante no como un, como...o sea, yo pues pienso que en la Normal debería de, como... enseñar directamente, por ejemplo, la regla de tres yo ya la vi en secundaria, la vi en, en primaria. Pienso que en la Normal ya deberíamos de ir, como decir, a conocer diferentes estrategias metodológicas y no es como estudiante que se llega a la aula.

Many teachers shared Pelucita's sentiments that their preparation included little to no pedagogy or how to teach content to their students. None learned how to manage student behavior or instruct in classrooms with the learner diversity they faced, cognitively, developmentally, and more. Teacher preparation focused exclusively on learning academic content. As mentioned above, content stood on its own, transmitted in pieces for teachers to memorize so they could then turn around and teach that same content to kids of all ages in exactly the same way. In line with the government's homogenous nearsightedness, teacher preparation was geared to a unigraude, urban education system and did "not consider conceptually or methodologically the specifics of rural education" so "the large majority of teachers who teach multi-grade classrooms were trained to teach the regular (single grade classroom) modality" (Castillo, et al., 2008, p. 5).

A Normal School director argued for expanding the academic content focus arguing that "in the [Normal] schools we should form a kind of teacher that goes beyond the graduated teacher, but rather a teacher that forms not just academically but also has a commitment to improve in values formation from the community" (MINED INFORMA, March 26, 2014). The MINED, she explained, was not preparing teachers in this more integral way. Instead, the MINED assumed teachers had the content knowledge necessary to teach academic content while officials provided monthly values orientations to improve "values formation in the community." This homogenous outlook – that values would provide the meaning necessary to improve education quality and societal transformation – overlooked the technical knowledge required to be an effective teacher. The MINED did not prepare teachers for pre-school, special education, physical education, computer education or adult education. Three universities were accredited to train secondary and university teachers but most rural teachers could not attain that option because they lived far from Managua or Leon – the Pacific Southwest region.

Teacher preparation's academic content focus did not prepare its teachers to understand and instruct from the entire academic curriculum, particularly in elementary math and language arts where basic literacy remained the focus through sixth grade. The lack of teacher knowledge made it increasingly difficult to teach upper elementary content. Teachers regularly skipped content, repeated exercises for which they felt comfortable with their knowledge, taught content they did not understand by copying from the program and

textbook, and often taught content incorrectly. Taken together, gaps in teacher knowledge along with MINED-approved instructional methods and automatic promotion drastically affected student learning with each elementary grade. (I report on relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice in academics in three areas – plans and planning, math, and Spanish Language and Literature – separately.)

There were other large gaps as well. Rural schools were required by mandate to have school gardens for 5th and 6th grade Technical-Vocational Orientation classes. The MINED introduced the gardens as a pedagogical strategy to help teachers introduce students “to sustainable agriculture methods for food and vegetables that they can consume in their own home and to complement a nutritional and healthy diet” (MINED INFORMA, December 20, 2013). The mandate erroneously assumed that all 5th and 6th grade teachers had ready knowledge on sustainable agriculture and nutrition or that they could easily assimilate it through self-learning. The MINED held teachers accountable for school gardens but did not provide the preparation or materials to ensure that as a pedagogical strategy they were successful. While teachers struggled with school gardens, they did not draw upon student and farming family knowledge to make the gardens successful because it was not in the curriculum or MINED-approved.

The Ortega government added information and communication technologies (ICT) as a cross-curricular pillar, meaning teachers were meant to incorporate ICT in all disciplines.^{lviii} No multigrade school had a working computer or any other technology, and most teachers had no personal access to technology in their homes or towns. Most teachers did not know how to type or had ever sat in front of a computer. The most up-to-date piece of technology in Los Jocotes was a boom box Liria bought in 2013 with money from parents for the national anthem and traditional dance presentations.

Classroom management and discipline was an enormous part of every school day, with teachers complaining to each other about chaos and not being able to teach anything after recess. Liria said she “was never prepared” for the student behaviors she encountered and that pedagogic advisors never helped her. Teachers received no information on child or youth development;^{lix} they learned to teach with the same uniform methodology from 1st through 11th grades with the main difference being curricular content. While the most

common strategy was to blame the student and family, few analyzed how instructional methods and repetitive content contributed to student frustration and classroom behaviors.

This uniform approach to content and transmission of information being at the center of teaching and learning was modeled in teacher preparation and continued during MINED PD. As related previously, PD instruction was done by experts through transmission and the waterfall of learning. Teachers were expected to assimilate content, know how to use it and teach it. MINED PD sessions included elementary and high school teachers together with no discussion about developmental differences or adaptations in content, methods, or skills development.

Teacher PD was based upon and served to reinforce government beliefs about teaching and learning. In monthly evaluations and planning, the approved procedure had teachers report on implementing their plans in percentages – which teachers reported as 90-100% completed. The plan was the guide, content and method – and it was based on copying curricular content several times (I analyzed this further in a separate document). This and other proceduralized spaces and activities, in which the same content, outcomes and reasons were repeated each month – left no space or need for conversations about how teachers might teach content differently to help students learn more. Lackluster student learning was routinely explained by what students lacked – motivation, interest, not doing homework, no family support. In these evaluations, the government did its part and teachers did their part. Teachers facilitated content to students on an approved timeline and accurately reported back to their superiors that they had complied. Weak teacher knowledge was not part of the process or procedure; it was never officially considered.

Though MINED discourse characterized teachers as innovators who implemented constructivism through investigations and project-based learning, a stronger message was that teachers had to be on the same page of the Basic National Curriculum at the same time. Teachers cited their faithful compliance to these expectations and following of uniform procedures. Profe Dinora explained its importance due to student mobility. “Any student,” she said, “could walk into any classroom in the country and not feel behind or unwelcome” because they were all on the same page and classrooms looked similar even. Some teachers experimented outside of the MINED’s watchful eye – only to return quickly to the

proceduralized norm “in case a pedagogic advisor visits the school,” Liria and others told me, obviously fearful they would get in trouble for falling out of step with their colleagues.

Though a teacher’s main contact with the MINED was through the Municipal office’s pedagogic advisors, Pelucita echoed her colleagues when she told me that “in general, in rural areas, it’s very infrequent.”¹⁴¹ The pedagogic advisors (AP) were tasked to provide personalized professional development; teachers vehemently questioned this objective. Their concerns were obvious throughout the first semester of each school year, as the surprise visits hung over teacher’s heads as a source of dread, harried texts and pep talks among each other, and threats to students that they behave during the visit. All the teachers described the purpose of the visit as “*fiscalizar*,” a word they interchanged with supervise, inspect, control, and criticize or find fault with. Pelucita explained: “What interests them is if you have everything in order, the orientations they give, like what we call the teacher’s folder...the attendance notebook, daily attendance, grade book, daily plan, monthly plan, practically that.”¹⁴¹

All rejected the MINED notion that they provided pedagogic assistance. “No, because they don’t, they aren’t really interested in that,” Liria said. She characterized their objectives as “to search for three legs on the cat,”¹⁴² and giving teachers grief and frustration. She added: “But really (pause), those advisors, it’s like they facilitate the work, for example, of the [Municipal MINED] Delegate,”¹⁴³ providing the details for the reporting she had to sign off and send to her superiors in the state MINED offices. Pelucita agreed that having the folder that advisors checked “is part of my job that I have to have it.” Pedagogic assistance would be more helpful, she offered, if they came “to see how someone is carrying out their work and to help with the difficulties one has.” She then clarified that “in reality who you look for a solution with to face difficulties is with other teachers in exchanges, not pedagogic advisors.” She paused and then continued.

One presumes that a person is a pedagogic advisor because he has more methodological strategies than a teacher in the classroom and he has to be prepared to

¹⁴¹ O sea por lo que a ellos lo interesa es si usted está llevando todo... las orientaciones de ellos, como es el, el... nosotros lo llamamos el archivo del maestro. Si, por ejemplo, si tiene el cuaderno de asistencia, pues asistencia diaria, llevar el registro de notas, el plan diario, la programación, prácticamente eso.

¹⁴² Buscarle tres pies al gato

¹⁴³ Pero realmente, esos asesores [pedagogicos], lo que hacen es como facilitarle el trabajo, por ejemplo, de la Delegada [Municipal del MINED].

give a response to those difficulties. To advise us, it's like advise and teach, give steps, and in reality I don't know, that is not provided, that is not done.¹⁴⁴

The pedagogic visits – like teacher preparation and PD – reduced teaching to having procedural papers in order and complying with MINED orientations. The monthly TEPCE – the last Friday of every month – was another main MINED-facilitated site for PD. Each TEPCE agenda was planned by national leaders and shared with state and municipal staff in a TEPE meeting 24-48 hours before each TEPCE. Local facilitators followed the TEPE orientations to lead teachers through evaluation and planning announcements and procedures. Communication of orientations was the over-riding purpose with compliance as the over-riding principle and message.

Curricular materials: Teacher guides, textbooks and other instructional materials.

Nicaraguan teachers had few official curricular resources, with the teacher program being the most critical and widely used. Plans and planning was one of the four major areas that teachers and MINED officials cited as comprising teaching (along with values, math and language arts). Officials oversaw every teachers' planning in monthly TEPCEs, and all multigrade teachers copied word for word from the multigrade malla and grade-relevant textbooks to plan and instruct, referring to the program as a teacher's machete. Because the National Basic Curriculum comprised of a teaching guide and unigrade textbooks was so important, I did a curricular analysis over two years, analyzing written materials along with teacher instruction using the materials and our ongoing conversations. That analysis is expanded in a separate document.

Ortega had provided a limited number of multigrade teaching guides in 2009 and a drastically reduced one 2011 (the *malla curricular*). The MINED provided them to only a fraction of multigrade schools and teachers. Rural multigrade teachers had the fewest textbook materials of all elementary schools which made their reliance on the teacher program and unigrade texts greater. In 2012, they received five half pieces of butcher paper,

¹⁴⁴ Para mí asesoría pedagógica es ver cómo se desempeña y ayudarle con las dificultades que uno tiene. En realidad con quien busca la solución para las dificultades es uno en los intercambios con otros maestros, no con asesores pedagógicos. Porque cuando estamos en reuniones así, un asesor que llega, llega solo a traer la asistencia y a eso solamente. No le interesa como..., le interesa ver los dificultades pero le interesa que nosotros como maestra busquemos las soluciones no dar soluciones a ellas. Bueno yo pienso que no, verdad, que se supone que una persona es asesor pedagógico porque tiene más estrategias metodológicas que una maestra que está en el aula, y tiene que estar preparado para darle respuesta a esas dificultades. Asesorarnos a nosotros. O sea, asesorar y enseñar, dé las pautas y en realidad no se, no se da eso, no hace eso.

one ream of 8.5 x 11 paper (500 sheets), a mop, a broom, two erasers and a box of chalk or white markers. In 2013, due to the cost incurred for the *diplomado*, teachers received no extra materials.

The few curricular materials teachers had available was apparent in the classroom and during a TEPCE evaluation conversation among a group of teachers about didactic resources:

PROFE GERA: What are didactic resources?

No one seemed to hear with all the activity around – with Fausto collecting money, some teachers planning, and others talking.

PROFE DINO: What are didactic materials? [She waited.] What are didactic materials? What are they? [She raised her voice each time.]

TEACH3: Books, fascículos, textbooks. [The multigrade teachers did not look up from her transcribing as she spoke.]

TEACH4: Abacus.

*PROFE FAUSTO: A teacher says to me, 'I have an abacus but I don't know how to use it.' I said to her, 'We'll learn how to use it.' ...Sometimes we have resources and we don't know how to use them.*¹⁴⁵

Following this exchange, Dinora and Gerónima wrote down "books, fascículos and textbooks."

The three materials cited in the group's answer were all the same thing: textbooks. Most multigrade teachers had no textbook in at least one content area for the grades they taught; when they called the MINED warehouse, they explained, the manager told them there were no more. Teachers with textbooks in some disciplines – like social studies, for example – did not include the information they required a teacher teach. In one section, the teacher guide "says I should give the students the characteristics of the state," Pelucita explained, shaking her head back and forth. The unigrade textbook had information on one of Nicaragua's 15 states and two autonomous regions: Chontales. "So I have to make, adapt that information I have to search for in other ways."¹⁴⁵ Pelucita lived in the department capital but said she had no resources to investigate her state and provide that information to the students. I observed teachers giving this and other assignments as homework for their students to investigate, knowing they had even fewer resources to investigate. Ambrosia told students to "ask siblings, neighbors and retired teachers in the community."¹⁴⁶ Then teachers did not check

¹⁴⁵ Entonces, me sale que yo le debe dar a los estudiantes las características del Departamento. En el libro de texto... no me sale, solo me sale de Chontales. Entonces yo tengo que hacer, adaptar...yo, esa información yo tengo que buscarla por otros medios.

¹⁴⁶ Andan a preguntar a sus hermanos mayores, sus vecinos, una Profesora jubilada en la comunidad.

the homework, they told me, because most if not all their students would not have done the assignment. In line with expectations, though, they could report to the MINED that they had covered that part of the curriculum as planned.

Curricular relevance: A unigrade, urban standard. The 2012-2013 curriculum did not explicitly represent or celebrate socio-cultural and economic ways of rural life, living, knowing and being; it ignored rural challenges, competencies and practical abilities (Gil, 2005, n.p.). Steeped in a unigrade, urban standard that ignored everything rural, it chose not to include “cultural, environmental, anthropological, [or] economic specifics,” even though it was these local particularities that were necessary for constructivist learning because it would “impregnate rural learning with sense and meaning learning, [and] fully integrate [it] with a sense of convenience and ownership” (Gil, 2010, n.p.). Rural families and teachers felt the Nicaraguan education system was irrelevant to their communities’ realities and needs (Arrien, 2011; Castillo, et al., 2008).

Ortega celebrated his government’s focus on rural education, providing more opportunities for youth and adult weekend classes for those who had to work or had never had the opportunity to go to school, and four or five vocational training classes for those who dropped out of school after graduating from sixth grade. Profe Adriana quietly questioned what she felt was lower quality than full-time high school, and vocational programs that were traditional and encouraged rural youth to drop out rather than continue their studies. “They effectively close the door for them to go on to higher education.”¹⁴⁷ Ortega had also reduced teacher preparation time and the high school graduation requirement for Sandinista youth to be trained to teach in the most isolated rural communities. The rural education program systematically lowered education quality for rural residents while reinforcing the idea that something, no matter the quality, was better than nothing.

The urban focus in education was prevalent during almost two decades of school decentralization (1990-2007) led by multi-lateral agencies throughout Central America as a one-size-fits-all solution to give autonomy to marginalized populations. Nicaraguan governments were the only ones to implement decentralization exclusively in urban schools (Corrales, 2006), and require monthly payments for each child schooled. When the government expanded decentralization into rural areas, it gave no thought to rurality (e.g.,

¹⁴⁷ Efectivamente cierran la puerta, que no pueden seguir con una educación superior en la Universidad.

one-teacher schoolhouses; little daily use of literacy skills; and extreme poverty) and called on the poorest communities to pay for their schooling (Gershberg & Meade, 2005, p. 302). Under this atypical decentralization, rural communities were hugely disadvantaged (Corrales, 2006) to the point where by 2007 63% of urban children who entered primary school finished sixth grade while only 23% of their rural counterparts graduated (Vijil, 2010).

Multigrade teachers who were born and raised in rural communities knew anti-rural sentiment and discrimination well. They made comments and jokes about being second class citizens in their profession. They made darker jokes about how their urban and high school colleagues perceived them and how MINED officials treated them. In private, they confided a desire for the government to embrace geographic particularities including unique challenges, strengths, aspirations and organic resources found within each region and community. Teachers would have to be encouraged to take advantage of and channel local resources and ways of knowing to teach, using people's struggle "for human rights, and those of the land, the environment, the direct contact with the earth, its care and production of wealth...so close to the values that have been lost in the urban sector" (Gil, 2010, n.p.). These ideas fit with the MINED's description of a curriculum in a high quality education^{lxii} and its discourse, but not with its one-size-fits-all procedures, changing orientations and focus on faithful compliance. This was one reason why it was easier to talk about education quality than enact it. In this and many other themes, teachers had to understand when government discourse remained as simply discourse and when it signaled a true change in action, usually when combined with supervisory actions to ensure compliance. Thus far, supervision of education quality was lacking as people continued to define what it was and what it was not.

Chapter Summary

One of the government's primary roles was *sensibilizando* its teachers to their new role as community activists. Teachers as public servants had to disseminate information about the Sandinista's National Human Development Plan to the school community and, more importantly, organize residents to participate in local programs and activities related to the Plan. A fundamental component of government consciousness-raising was changing teacher beliefs and values to be more in line with Sandinista ones. This was clear with the government's PD and discourse regarding its Shared Responsibility Model and 24-session

diplomado that focused almost exclusively on values, government policies and national programs. The socio-professional environment of these efforts communicated government beliefs about teaching and learning while providing teachers this extra-curricular information.

While teachers were inundated with information and ordered to expand their work outside of the classroom, they were blamed for Nicaragua's crisis in education. The government overlooked the long-term and systemic nature of the crisis or its multiple influences, from a relatively small budgetary investment in education (2.1 of GDP rather than 6-7% agreed upon internationally), to physical access to schools, teacher preparation, availability of material resources, and student performance. Many, including government officials, blamed individual teachers for this multi-faceted crisis. Government policies reflected this assumption even as they contributed to deepening the crisis. I analyzed two government policies that inundated the classroom: automatic promotion and school remediation, both mandated for students of all grades. Teachers understood these policies differently and their practice reflected different combinations of beliefs and knowledge, as well as external influences like MINED supervision. Since both policies attempted to address student learning, teachers talked a lot about why students did not learn, why they forgot, and why they were responsible for not learning – not teachers.

I ended the chapter with an analysis of how the world (e.g., UNESCO and its coordinated education efforts) began to shift from schooling access to education quality. Nicaragua responded with discourse and projects to raise much-needed international funding, but floundered in defining what exactly quality was and how they were to implement it. Without that definition and understanding, it will be difficult to improve quality. In the meantime, government officials and the public continue to blame teachers for the crisis in education.

Chapter Six

Physical Setting: San José de la Montaña Sub-Region

All the participating multigrade teachers worked in the central mountains of the San José de la Montaña sub-region. Many were born and raised in one of the small communities that comprised the region and they spoke with pride about their mountain roots and history of struggle. A handful lived in the nearest city (the municipal and department capital), commuting each day to and from their school on at least one city bus and one interstate bus. Families depended on a variety of activities for their livelihood, from growing basic crops to vegetables and fruit, day laborers and domestic servants, to tobacco and coffee production and harvesting, to financial support from family in the exterior (Costa Rica, Spain and the U.S.). All family members I knew had between no formal schooling and a sixth grade education. Most had access to some basic services, like water and electricity with the former severely rationed, even as most schools did not. In the following section, I describe physical aspects of the study's setting beginning with rurality defined from different points of view. Rurality was a physical delineator between urban and rural, a sector of the population most affected by the education crisis, and a part of many participants' identities. It defined socio-economic opportunities in participating communities and beliefs about formal schooling. Since all participating schools had been rebuilt under President Aleman following Hurricane Mitch, I provide one physical description.

Rurality

In 2013, nearly 45% of Nicaragua's population lived in rural areas (UNESCO, 2013), mostly in the north-central mountains and Atlantic Coast. One example of how Nicaraguan governments historically marginalized and misunderstood rural life was how none defined what rural was to guide their rural policies and programs, or national development plans. The Ortega administration's National Institute of Information for Development (INIDE) defined rural in relation to urban and not on its own terms. A "population zone" was urban when it was located in a *cabecera* or state, regional or municipal "head" city, along with population concentrations of 1,000 or more people who had access to "streets, electricity, commercial and/or industrial businesses, and other characteristics" (Cuthbert, 2011, p. 4). Localities with less than 1,000 inhabitants "that do not reunite the minimum urban conditions mentioned above and that have a dispersed population are considered rural" (Cuthbert, 2011, p. 4). No

government agency had to use this definition, and the MINED allowed school principals to categorize their schools as urban or rural based on their own criteria (CIASES, 2008). Not having one official parameter or definition of rurality made it “difficult to define specific needs and opportunities, as well as education policies that would respond to these” (Castillo, et al., 2007, p. 6-7).

People commonly spoke of urban/rural differences in schooling indicators but not in aspects like curricular content and teacher preparation or professional development. It was clear, for example, that “levels of teacher empiricism [no teaching certificate])...high school offerings and school coverage were the variables with the largest gaps between rural and urban zones” (Cuthbert, 2011, p. 5). The homogenous nearsightedness mindsight made officials blind to how curricular content was not “universal” and how much was irrelevant to rural life and values or required local information the MINED did not make available. The MINED alluded to regional differences and purported to allot 30% of instructional time to “teacher autonomy” (MINED, 2009) for teachers to adapt the curriculum to local conditions. At the same time, it allotted most of that same 30% to nationally-defined TEPCE workshops, quarterly grading periods and other administrative requirements that took away instructional time (MINED, 2009). The rest (and more) disappeared in ongoing orientations that took teachers out of the classroom each month.

The government’s homogenous mindset included a generalized debasement of rurality as a population with less capacity and potential than urban families and economies. The few adaptations the government implemented stemmed from these beliefs, with a simplified multigrade teacher program, and rural programs that did not contemplate or ensure rural youth the same higher education opportunities as their urban counterparts. For many, rural Nicaragua was effectively “abandoned” (Bermúdez, 2010). In addition, the fact that pedagogic advisors provided teachers no advisement or resources to make appropriate adaptations was a strong message that despite its discourse the government did not expect or approve of individual adaptations. Even stronger was the TEPCE oversight and pedagogic advisor visit supervision whose focus was on ensuring that every teacher was on the same page, literally, of the National Basic Curriculum – and not adapting its methods or content. All rural teachers spoke privately of changes they would make if they could, and all felt

strongly they could not, including principals Fausto and Adriana. Compliance was critical to their work.

Many rural teachers and families applauded Ortega's expansion of high school opportunities for rural youth, mostly *a distancia*, or Saturdays. "One of the principal actions that will be implemented," MINED officials announced in 2013, "is broadening the modality of secondary studies in rural zones, which is where there is great demand for coverage" (MINED INFORMA, April 2013). That year, El Roble Elementary School became the site of *a distancia* adult education classes, with "a lot of people attending," Ambrosia told me. "They did a campaign to enroll people, and everything," she explained. The young people who did not take advantage of the opportunity had a "lack of interest, they don't want to study anymore. It doesn't grab their attention or the girls paired up with someone."¹⁴⁸ While some teachers expressed concern that rural high school on Saturdays had significantly less instructional time and thus be of lower quality, everyone admitted that it helped youth and adults who worked during the week get an education they would never otherwise have available to them. As with so many aspects of education, the government focused on the numbers in response to concerns about quality: thousands more youth accessed secondary education through weekend classes. Officials tended to dismiss questions about what they learned with one-fifth the normal classroom instruction by citing the power of student motivation and self-learning – and reinforcing beliefs about teaching and learning as information transmission and memorization.

Rural communities had few curricular resources and high teacher absences in their multigrade elementary schools, and most were grateful to have the opportunity to attend secondary classes for the first time. No government before Ortega had emphasized rural high school, ever. "Before, most communities didn't have even to sixth grade," Ambrosia told me, and described what happened during Ortega's first years in office in an extremely isolated rural community where she worked before coming to Los Jocotes. "The Ortega government sent five volunteer teachers from the university. They gave a book to students, a boatload of students, who came from surrounding communities to study in San Luis, in the Elementary

¹⁴⁸ Aquí hay varios que están viniendo. Aquí están y se le ha hecho campana, pues, para que vengan a matricularse y todo... en algunos casos es por eso que le digo, falta de interés, que ya no quieren estudiar, pues. No les llaman la atención en estudiar, ya luego las chavalas van saliendo pronto, que se, se casaron, se juntaron con alguien.

School, on Sundays,” Liria told me. “And now they are graduating from high school. They couldn’t study before because they didn’t have the money for the local private school”¹⁴⁹ run by the public elementary school principal.

Ortega touted rural vocational programs the MINED planned to implement for graduates of sixth grade. They included agriculture/animal husbandry, mechanics and baking classes. Some teachers worried this emphasis could deter rural youth from continuing their high school education, effectively terminating higher education options. Many teachers felt sixth grade in rural areas was enough. Profe Regalia explained that “with sixth grade one can get a technical career or any other kind of job...sixth is very important to get, to study.”¹⁵⁰ Though the majority of university students under Ortega received scholarships, most rural families with no steady income from the exterior could not send one or more children to a university because of the prohibitive costs of transportation and urban life (e.g., rent, food, transportation).

As the only president who consistently paid attention to rural families and communities, Ortega had a growing base of support. His government provided “Solidarity Bonuses”¹⁵¹ for low-wage public servants, a fairly constant stream of hand-outs to the poor (see below) and a massive expansion of public services while longer-term systemic changes took root. Ortega used the Sandinista Party’s ALBANISA (a joint business venture with Venezuela) and a \$500 million personal fund from President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela for his short-term socio-economic projects and expanded health care (including Doctor’s salaries), circumventing Congressional approval. Hand-outs addressed the most basic needs of food and shelter. For example, when beans surged above \$1/pound during a regional drought in 2014 (when many rural poor families made less than \$1/day on average), the government provided 5lb. bags of fresh beans to the poor until prices stabilized months later. Ortega gifted 14 sheets of tin roofing to thousands of families, helping many convert leaking shacks into dry places to live and sleep, improving children’s and adult’s health and well-

¹⁴⁹ Cuando ganó Daniel, cerraron escuelas, y llegaron maestros voluntarios, unos muchachos de la universidad que ellos salían, mandaron cinco maestros voluntarios, y les daban un libro a los mismos estudiantes, y fueron una barbaridad de estudiantes, que se levantó las comunidades y fueron a estudiar a San Luis. Usaron la escuela [de básica] los domingos y llegaban bastantes chiguines. Y están sacando su quinto año, bastantes. De que muchos estudiantes no podían estudiar porque no tenían como pagar el privado.

¹⁵⁰ Ya con sexto grado ya puede sacar su carrera técnica o cualquier otro oficio, con su sexto grado. El sexto es muy importante que lo saquen.

¹⁵¹ Bonos Solidarios

being. Schools and community associations organized other hand-outs, including family garden projects with seeds and tools; cooking stoves and other housewares; and small animal production projects of a handful of chickens or pigs. Opposition figures dismissed these efforts as “crumbs,” questioned their sustainability and denounced them as politically motivated because they said Ortega increased them during election years.^{lxiii} All the beneficiaries I met scoffed at these critiques. Many suffered daily hunger combined with chronic, preventable illnesses. Adults struggled every day of the year to get enough food on the table. They welcomed help that temporarily reduced their family’s suffering and mitigated daily life challenges.

Rural Nicaraguans often expressed pride in their rurality. Many shared a belief that anti-values emerged and thrived in urban areas and were imposed through international agreements. Urban life included access to the internet and FACEBOOK where urban youth were exposed to anti-values. Neighbors didn’t know neighbors, families separated and disintegrated, violence was common on the streets and in homes, drugs and alcohol were on every street corner. People in urban areas had no time for family or neighbors; they lost touch with the former while never getting to know the latter. International agreements (i.e., the Rights of the Child) changed how parents and teachers could educate children. Many insisted they were not changes for the better.

Many people pointed to imported beliefs and lifestyles – like abortion, homosexuality, internet pornography – that were at the root of a national downslide away from positive, Nicaraguan values into the anti-values morass they perceived as infecting their once tranquil communities. People living in rural communities viewed urban dwellers as having lost Nicaraguan values and traditions. Corruption and greed were common in Managua and other urban centers. They had little effect on one’s life in a distant, isolated and small rural community. People made comments about Daniel and Murillo like “they went in poor and now they’re rich” or “they had the opportunity to get rich off the people and they took it.” Many would add a comment like, “Can’t blame them for that” while others found the level of corruption reprehensible, but unresolvable. Corruption was synonymous with politics and it would not change. Instead of worrying about it, people relied on each other and family who had traveled afar to help them economically. Ortega was the first president since

the Sandinista Revolution to pay so much attention, and invest so much money, in the poor majority – and he did it talking about recuperating Nicaraguan values.

Everyone professed to prefer rural poverty over urban poverty, again from their imaginings. When people traveled to Managua they got lost, as did most visitors. There were few street names and it took almost two hours to cross from one side of the city to the other – in taxi. “If you’re going to be poor,” people said, “you’re better off out here because here you have fruit trees, fish in the rivers, you never starve or go hungry” whereas in the city you had to pay for everything. “So if you can’t find work over there?” a father asked me, ready with the answer. “You don’t eat. You’re screwed.” Some asserted that “life here is still tranquil” while others said even rural life was becoming ruined by similar urban trends and lifestyles.

No region or community was spared the onslaught of anti-values, parents and teachers told me. What had been strong Nicaraguan values were being replaced by anti-values, from the cities and often directly imported from the exterior via cell phones and FACEBOOK. The internet provided youth access to other ways of thinking and acting. Another international incursion came with international agreements successive Nicaraguan governments had signed, the most egregious to parents and teachers being the Convention of the Rights of the Child signed in 1990. This and other agreements bound the country to ways of doing that were not Nicaraguan – and they took away Nicaraguan ways of solving problems.

Beliefs of those in rural communities about the dangers of urban life contributed to an already large divide in which many urban dwellers looked down on all things rural. From a middle and upper class urban point of view – widely held by people who had lived for generations in urban areas – those living in rural communities were “dirty” because they knew nothing about hygiene, ignorant because they had never made the time to go to school, and “in the dark.” The National Literacy Crusade anthem was one of many Sandinista expressions that promoted greater value on urban living, society and people than those in the countryside. The messages were clear. Values were easier to inculcate with urban dwellers than the stubborn, ignorant farmer stuck in his ways. If rural values were mentioned, it was from an idyllic, romanticized past that no longer existed in which the farmer had plentiful food, a strong nuclear family and a ferocious love for his homeland.

Arguably one of the most detrimental influences on rural development in Nicaragua was deep historically-rooted prejudices about all things rural that guided government policy

and programs. Rural people were thought to be dumber than their urban counterparts, and rural families and teachers regularly advised children to continue their schooling studies so they could “be somebody.” Parents who had never been to school or to sixth grade only counseled children and grandchildren to stay in school so they would not “be nobody, like me.” When Liria placed her son in a private school and mentioned that she had been taking her son to her rural multigrade school for the previous two years, the principal said, “Oh, then he’ll be really behind in his classes. We’ll work hard so he gets caught up.” When students from Los Jocotes applied to a semi-private urban school run by an education NGO in the state capital, several kids were initially denied because they came from a multigrade school – despite an agreement with the NGO that a small number of kids would be accepted each year. The NGO staff intervened and three children were accepted. During a *diplomado* session in which rural teachers tried to organize a Secret Santa celebration, the high school teachers (all urban dwellers) refused to join. The rural teachers joked about how the urban teachers were concerned that the rural teachers would give them cheap gifts, or live chickens, or that anything they gave would transfer lice, fleas or some disease to their urban families.

In a TEPCE, the nucleus principal – an urban teacher who commuted each day – alluded to the stereotypical, one-dimensional rural man violently controlling the actions of his wife or partner to the point of harming her psychological and physical health. Rural teachers reacted first commenting to each other and then to the entire group of rural and urban colleagues. An excerpt from my field notes below shows how the principal never contemplated what was a blatant problem to rural teachers: the urban health system did not understand or respect rural women and had not gained their trust.

One teacher raised her hand. When the facilitator pointed to her, she stood up from her desk and looked around at her colleagues, waiting to get their attention. “Profes, compañeras and compañeros. It is important to underscore that sometimes they don’t attend to people very well in the clinics or hospital, especially people who come from the countryside. When you come from the [rural] communities, they ignore you, they make you wait for hours and an entire day – and then they tell you to come back and you have to do it again. That’s why some people from the countryside don’t go even when they’re sick. They have work to do, lots of it, and they feel they can’t leave their work because it’s their livelihood. To leave their work only to have people make them sit and wait all day while they attend to others who come from the barrio nearby..., it makes you feel bad.

They don't go or they go once they are critically ill and there is no other choice. But for the people from the city, the doors are opened for them. But not for people from the countryside. Sometimes they have to take their own sheets because they tell them they won't provide one. Sometimes they are there all day, sick, and the hospital does not provide food. Sometimes they are released early because the hospital says they are fine when they are still very ill. People in the clinics and hospitals here [in the state capital] can leave people from the countryside waiting for hours while all the people from the city pass in front of them, get attended to, get medicines, return to their homes. And we are still waiting to be seen. There is a lot of discrimination in the health care that is provided here.

The teacher sat down, and those around her nodded their heads giving her phrases of encouragement and thanks. The pedagogic advisor stared at the teacher, speechless for a few seconds. Then she addressed the rural teachers, raising her voice. "If you all know of abuse, you have an obligation to denounce it. You have an obligation to help people so they can denounce it. We have to demand our rights and help others demand theirs. With respect, of course, but we have to do it." The principal backed her up. "If you have to, you know, speak with the person in charge or the director of the hospital, and if you have to, the state director of the Ministry." The multigrade teachers were quiet, staring at the facilitators. No one nodded in agreement.

Like the government they represented, local MINED officials did not recognize their need to understand rural realities from a rural perspective. It also demonstrated why teachers and others were reluctant at times to raise issues related to rurality or other areas of differences that went against the government tide. Officials ended the above conversation by putting the onus back on the rural residents who were mistreated in public health institutions. If someone was mistreated when they were sick and needed health care, how would they be treated if they went to denounce a nurse, doctor or hospital director, the latter being highly protected Sandinistas? For many rural adults, denouncing people was a foreign interaction, one only "educated" people did; many reviled it as arrogance. Rural life was steeped in beliefs that people tried to do their best, everyone made mistakes, some support was better than nothing so protect it when you have it (they knew no support well) and pardoning was more powerful than denouncing. Many also believed an untrained (often illiterate) person had no right to question a professional about their job, and that professionals viewed them harshly and of little human value. These beliefs held true for interactions in health care,^{lxiv} education and with other professionals.

The Sub-Region of San José de la Montaña

The waterfall of learning was a metaphor and method the government and teachers talked about and put into practice in different parts of their professional lives. It was a metaphor I extended to explain Ortega's governance and the powerful current he created through his waterfall of loyalists to communicate his discourse and values, his National Plan and programs, his proceduralized methods and supervision – all reaching into teachers' and families' daily lives. For families in the mountains where this study took place, the waterfall was not just a metaphor. Waterfalls were everywhere. Rivers crisscrossed the countryside and were an integral part of mountain life, a regular source of livelihood and daily activities for families with rationed drinking water (e.g., 1-3 days per week or 20 minutes most days) or none at all. Most families relied upon agriculture for their livelihood so water from the rivers and heavens was a critical source of their lives. Some families were caretakers of *fincas* or small properties of mostly urban landowners, living in small shacks with no running water or electricity and using nearby rivers for bathing and washing. Others worked in tobacco – either on the land or travelling into the capital to tobacco factories where fresh tobacco was dried, processed into cigars, packaged for export and shipped to destinations unknown. Some cultivated vegetables with irrigation from a nearby river, particularly potatoes and cabbage. Others followed harvests of different fruits, vegetables and coffee. Most planted and harvested their own corn and beans throughout the 6-month rainy season from May to November. The rivers roared during the rainy season (e.g., winter), their powerful currents adding a seasonal danger to daily life, particularly for adults stricken by alcohol and children crossing multiple rivers to get to and from school. Swelling rivers made communities incommunicado when their rushing currents took out entire formal bridges, as happened regularly on the road to El Roble and to Los Jocotes, most informal bridges (e.g., tree trunks), or triggered massive mudslides on small dirt roads, paths and the main highway.

The physical boundaries of the sub-region were not defined by rivers. Instead, the southern and eastern sides were determined by two formal roads, the western side by a neighboring municipality, and the northern side by the encroaching urban outskirts of the state and municipal capital city. Communities dotted the mountainous landscape, built into the hillsides with dirt paths and rutted often impassable roads being the main connectors. The southernmost road was 20-kilometers of cobblestone that meandered up and down mountain

ranges to its termination in the small town of Santo Domingo, the neighboring municipal capital. A bus traveled every hour or so from 6:30am to 5:30pm at about 10-15 kilometers an hour chugging slowly up or braking slowly down to the main highway on the eastern border. That highway ran hundreds of kilometers from a northern border town to Managua and points farther south. Elementary schools served many communities throughout the region with most offering 1st through 6th grades taught by one, two or three teachers. Older students who lived in Los Coquitos, La Montanita and higher attended either Santo Domingo High or San Jose High during the week. Those who took classes Saturdays traveled to a neighboring municipality to the south.

While the men tended to work in jobs related to agriculture – on their own lands or as day laborers – women often did domestic work for family members and neighbors in their community or they traveled to the state capital. Both men and women worked in tobacco factories in the capital and both traveled to work in Costa Rica. They left children with extended family to provide much-needed income that was so difficult to generate off the land or with the few paying jobs available. Jobs were tight and most people in rural communities were unemployed or under-employed. A much smaller number of family members travelled farther – women to Spain and Europe as domestic workers, and men to the U.S. for a wider variety of job options. The extra income provided by these family members conspicuously raised living conditions of their loved ones who often lived in large, concrete block homes with multiple rooms and high-priced roofing (not tin), cellphones for multiple family members, imported toys for children and a computer or other technology in the home. Some families invested remittances in a truck or other vehicle they put to work for the sustenance of their families, but most invested in infrastructure, food and other basic goods for their children.

Despite providing noticeable improvements in a family's lifestyle and a dramatic shift from bare survival in extreme poverty to a more middle class upbringing, children suffered the most from family dispersion. For some it created additional mobility and instability that affected their home life and education. Freydis was in second grade when both his parents moved to Costa Rica and left him with his grandfather. He became moody and fought with his peers constantly, bursting into tears several times a day before lashing out violently in fits of rage. Within a month of his parent's departure, he left school when his grandfather moved

to a *fincas* higher up in the mountains. His parents returned within one year, like many parents who went to Costa went on a one-year work contract. Others returned to visit once or twice per year. Several mothers in Los Jocotes returned from Costa Rica and did not return despite plans to do so once they saw how difficult their absence had been on their children, particularly in their schooling.

The consequences of parent mobility on learning were immeasurable and grave. Grisel and Rahmany were to second graders whose respective fathers left for the U.S. in 2012. Both had attended school regularly and usually done their school work in class – until their fathers left. Neither child ate or slept for the several weeks it took to hear their fathers had arrived safely. Their school attendance dropped markedly, and when they attended they refused to do school work, spent much time staring out the window, drawing in a notebook or picking fights with classmates – and leaving school early. Both seemed to slip into a kind of depression, and their mothers said they were misbehaving so tremendously they did not know what to do. Within five months, Grisel had returned to her mostly bubbly self, while Rahmany dropped out. His mother promised he'd return to second grade the following year but he did not. No one knew what happened to him.

Parents who traveled the farthest, to the U.S. and Europe, had the longest absences, particularly for a child, that often became the most difficult and costly of all family separations. Children had the least contact with them and no expectation of seeing them again. Steven's mother left for Spain when he was little and he had attended at least one school each year since. He had repeated each grade at least once, and had been expelled from four schools for his behavior. When he dropped out of fourth grade in El Roble in 2013 at 13 years old, his grandmother called her daughter and demanded she return to decide what to do with him. Just as behavior changed dramatically when one or two parents left a child, differences in behavior were similarly notable when parents returned home. In Los Jocotes and El Roble students whose parents returned seemed to mature overnight with the instant stability they suddenly had. The dramatic changes in the children's behavior were indisputable, with the level of aggression, violence and ability to concentrate rising and falling with each departure and each return.

The core participating schools. A rural community's school often served as a community center, in large part because of its infrastructure. Elementary and high school

classes were held only in the mornings in the region, and classes were held for all six months of winter or rain, and three months of dryness and dust. Once the rains began, teachers and principals routinely warned students to steer clear of the *quebradas* or rivers. They reminded them that the waterways were unpredictable, and that they took lives with no notice. Each day, many of the students from El Roble crossed up to five *quebradas* to walk from school to their homes. Older siblings helped younger siblings, so when the upper grades were cancelled or an older sibling got sick, younger students would stay home as well. It was usually a matter of physical security. The school grounds were unoccupied every afternoon and on the weekends, unless the community offered weekend high school. All the communities used their schools as community meeting places since many had no other social gathering place in their town.

San Jose schools also served as the center of a godparent program administered by the international Christian NGO, World Vision. Families received varying levels of support from their international godparents, from clothing to school supplies to cash. Every child in the participating communities had a godparent, as did many students living in the urban state capital. As long as the child remained in school, the godparent committed to supporting her or him through high school. Each year, children drew a picture and a parent, neighbor or teacher wrote a quick note for students to copy. When the people in Los Jocotes community decided to terminate their fledgling drinking water project because the communities above them kept taking their water before it got to them, the school's well became the water supply for many of the community's families. People would line up in the morning with their jugs and buckets, and begin the long process of drawing water from the well and then carrying on their shoulders to their homes, and returning to the school once again. In Los Coquitos, all community meetings and even regional meetings were held in the oldest of the school classrooms, a single adobe structure that housed the 1st/2nd grade classroom most years. The teacher insisted she could leave nothing on the walls or on her one bookshelf because "the families take stuff each time."

The schools were built between 2000 and 2002 following a devastating Hurricane ("Mitch") that killed thousands of people and destroyed many schools, hospitals, clinics and roads in the central-northern mountains. The working elementary structures in each participating school were immaculate. They had two (Los Jocotes and La Montanita with one

and two teachers), three (Los Coquitos and El Quebracho) and six (El Roble) spacious brick and mortar classrooms with red tile floors connected by covered red tile corridors raised more than a foot high. El Roble had well-groomed gardens of ornamental and flowering bushes and plants, as well as fruit trees that the 5th/6th graders tended regularly, while the other school grounds were mostly barren and unplanted. Each school had old classrooms as well. In El Roble, one of three small adobe rooms with large cracks in its walls housed the preschool; its dirt floors and one small window with no ventilation contrasted to the red tile floors, desks and two walls of windows in each primary classrooms. Los Coquitos had their preschoolers in a new structure and the 1st/2nd graders were in the one-room adobe classroom with a leaking roof. Los Jocotes had a new preschool structure behind the school that was well-ventilated and open. In El Roble, the teachers converted two extra classrooms in a library with one bookshelf of mostly textbooks and a storage area for the school nutrition program with bags of dry goods thrown on the floor. Los Jocotes had one extra classroom where the teacher locked the books in a metal cabinet and kept the dry goods piled on a table.

Elementary and high school classrooms were generic in all the rural schools I visited. The front and back walls had either a blackboard or whiteboard, with a government slogan and some part of the alphabet, rarely a complete version. The two longer walls had windows with '*persianas*' or rectangular pieces of glass that opened and closed together manually. The floors were red tile cement and tile roofing with asbestos interior roofing that was often missing or broken in parts. Emilia had a family of bats in the ceiling above her front blackboard that left bat droppings each morning that the students had to clean – with well water and no soap. El Roble had beehives, bats and rats in their roofs. Classrooms had a teacher's table, one filing cabinet and student desks; some had a book shelf. Student desks were a single metal frame with wood slats for the seat and back, and a small tabletop of wood that was often so pockmarked it was difficult to write on; seats often had missing slabs of wood and some had no backs left. Walls for the most part were bare brick; some teachers posted the days of the week or months of the year, and many had the classroom cleaning schedule with groups of student names for each day of the week.

Despite the high quality physical infrastructure of classrooms, other physical conditions at all rural schools were challenging. One third (34%) of rural schools had drinking water (vs. 93% in urban schools); 28% had a well (all schools in this study) and

40% had no access to water. One fifth of rural schools had electricity (vs. 90% in urban schools). In 2010, the deficit to achieve universal sixth grade coverage required 600 classrooms but the government had money for 150. Of the school infrastructure that existed, almost half was debilitated (IEEPP, 2011). In 2016, “according to the latest official statistics, which are from 2014, 25% of schools in the country are still in bad condition” (Bermudez, February 2016). In 2014 Murillo closed the office in charge of school construction temporarily due to apparent misuse of funds. Over five thousand properties (5,296) slated for schools to be built were bogged down in legalization (land title) proceedings (IEEPP, 2011).

Difficult work conditions. Nicaraguan teachers talked regularly about how their work was negatively affected by the conditions in which they worked: the large number of rambunctious students in classrooms that saw a lot of violence, a need for textbooks and other didactic materials, deteriorated and unmaintained infrastructure and furniture, and health issues. Student ages ranged greatly in multigrade classrooms due to multiple grades and a large percentage of over-age students who repeated grades; Ambrosia and Regalia had children from 5 to 12 years old in their 1st/2nd grade classrooms and 8 to 16 years old in their 3rd/4th grade classrooms. Conversations in every TEPCE tended to revolve around chronic health issues that seemingly every teacher suffered. Most could not treat their conditions on a regular basis, unless they had a family member in the exterior sending them money. One teacher from the nucleus collapsed in her classroom in 2013; she died several weeks later because her family could not afford to import a respiratory device she needed to survive.

Teachers and parents saw few if any advantages to multigrade classrooms. As one mother put it, “Being a teacher is not very easy. To cope with a pack (or herd) of children, and even worse in multigrade!”¹⁵² Pelucita was as blunt: “Advantages in multigrade? Very few. No, not one. I don’t think I have heard of any. But disadvantages? A lot!”¹⁵³ Fausto, a local MINED leader, agreed. “No, no, I don’t see any advantage,”¹⁵⁴ he told me.

Teacher work satisfaction was very low. Earning \$170/month, Nicaraguan teachers were by far the lowest paid in the region and even in comparison to some of the poorest

¹⁵² Y ser Profesor no es tan fácil. Lidar con una manada de criaturas y peor multigla-, multigrado.

¹⁵³ ¿Ventajas de multigrado? (pausa) Muy pocas. No, ninguna. (laughs) Yo creo que...no he oído. Ahora bien. ¿Desventajas? ¡Muchas!

¹⁵⁴ No, no, yo no veo ninguna ventaja.

nations in the world (Sandino, 2012). Rural teachers paid a much larger percentage of their small income on travel than their urban counterparts, either to get between home and school and/or to submit reports to the MINED Municipal offices. Profe Liria paid at least \$8/week to travel to and from Los Jocotes, while Pelucita and Murella paid more than \$10/week. Urban teachers paid less than \$1.50/week at most. The MINED never reimbursed teachers for work-related expenses, though they often required that teachers travel to municipal or state offices, or photocopy PD documents. Ortega provided the “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity bonuses” (\$24.30 USD/month) to public servants who made less than \$300/month (the monthly food basket was estimated to be around \$410). Bonuses came from ALBANISA – a Sandinista Party business with Venezuela – and not the national budget (Lemus, 2013).

Many non-educators told me how easy a teacher’s job was because it was part-time and only in the mornings. Few realized that teachers had to plan each afternoon and even fewer understood the stressors that affected teachers’ lives. Many thought teachers made too much for their work, despite their salaries being the lowest in all of Latin America. Headaches were common and teachers regularly yelled at students that they had a headache after only one or two hours in the classroom. Profe Regalia described her emotions in a school assembly to all the students present, after telling them they came to school, didn’t pay attention, screamed and yelled and fought all day. “You become exasperated. It is a disappointment, a letdown, to put so much effort and the students do not respond.”¹⁵⁵ Teachers also spoke sadly of a changing society that revered them less and less as pillars of the community and now signaled them out “as the principal people responsible for the nation’s education problems” (PREAL, 2007, p. 21).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I described key aspects of Nicaraguan teachers’ physical settings as a companion to the previous chapter on their socio-professional settings. The multi-layered interactions and understandings I described in chapter 5 took place in different physical environments described here, from the sub-region to the high school nucleus site of PD to each individual school community and site. Participants worked in many of these physical environments. The physical environments contributed to how educators understood and acted

¹⁵⁵ Uno se desespera. Es una decepción, forzarse tanto uno y que los estudiantes no responden.

within changing policies and mandates, and how they negotiated values education as part of the other aspects of their work.

This lays the foundation for the following three chapters on values education. Chapter 7, “*Values Education: Shared and Contested Beliefs in Overlapping Contexts*,” looks at the Sandinista vision of using values and shared beliefs to transform Nicaraguan society one person at a time. Each person becomes a multiplier, transforming family and community members to help transform the nation. Chapter 8, “*Transmitting and Receiving Knowledge and Knowledge Gaps in Values Education*,” looks at teacher experiences and understandings of values education at the bottom of the waterfall, so to speak, in their communities and classrooms. The focus is on institutional and individual knowledge (and gaps) which greatly influenced values education practice. Chapter 9, “*Teachers Negotiated Competing Beliefs Systems regarding Values and Schooling*,” continues to look at teacher experiences and understandings of values education at the bottom of the waterfall with a special focus on four belief systems.

PART THREE

In part three, I look at how teachers negotiated shared societal beliefs about values, government and MINED beliefs about teaching and learning, and official knowledge and knowledge gaps with their individual beliefs and knowledge as they decided how to practice values education. Ortega's top-down governance through the waterfall as described thus far may appear to some readers to effectively squash teacher agency. It did not. Teachers used what they knew and believed, each other, and family residents with whom they held a shared history and many shared beliefs, to understand and act upon each MINED policy and orientation.

Ortega and Murillo were inspired by the Sandinista's successful empowerment of close to 100,000 young people who became dedicated Sandinista leaders during the five-month National Literacy Crusade in 1980. Ortega's national project in 2012-13 was unable to garner that same kind of success despite its attempts to convert or *sensibilizar* all teachers into Sandinista militants through its values education push. The GRUN waterfall could control national, state and municipal MINED staff, but it could only inform and influence the 55,000 classroom teachers. Teachers taught according to their own understandings of their strengths, the content and student/family/community needs, how they understood each MINED mandate, and if/when/how they chose to act upon each.

The following three chapters underscore many aspects of this agentic behavior. Teachers critiqued MINED processes, procedures and orientations vocally during PD as well as privately among colleagues and with me. They decided individually and collegially how to support each other in what many perceived to be a professionally unsupportive environment. They chose when and how to fully implement certain mandates, barely implement others (enough to not draw negative attention), and not implement others. These decisions were guided by their beliefs and knowledge systems interacting with those of the government and MINED.

One U.S. mentor commented that after reading chapter 4 she was exhausted and wondered how teachers could do anything. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 show how teachers persevered due in part to many beliefs related to their Christian faith, patriotism, solidarity, and the importance of education in rural areas for the youngest population. Despite what some perceived as an almost invincible top-down governance style through a powerful

waterfall of people who espoused Sandinista ideals and actions, the government did not succeed in gaining a commitment from all teachers to implement its one-size-fits-all programs and campaigns at their schools and school communities faithfully. Teachers as a group, and particularly rural multigrade teachers, did not suffer from the national government's homogenous nearsightedness nor its deficit view of rurality. Multigrade teachers whose families came from the mountains shared its history, strengths and opportunities. Many struggled with the government's homogenous vision that conflicted with local identity and knowledge, strengths, and aspirations.

Building on part two, I now analyze how teachers on the ground, in the micro-contexts of their schools and classrooms, used their beliefs and knowledge systems to understand and navigate government and institutional beliefs and knowledge systems. As the multigrade teachers in this study taught me, understanding how teachers used their beliefs and knowledge in their practice could only be understood by examining relationships among shared societal, government, institutional and individual teacher beliefs and knowledge. These were apparent in their many interactions, expectations, understandings, discourse and actions. I culminate the analysis by understanding beliefs and knowledge systems related to schooling and those typically ignored as falling outside of school settings (Five & Buehls, 2012, p. 478).

In 2013, I learned how teacher discourse, beliefs, knowledge and actions in classrooms often echoed or paralleled institutional and government beliefs and knowledge, and knowledge gaps. This was clearest during professional development and interactions among teachers and MINED officials. It allowed me to see where teachers created variation and strayed from government orientations and procedures or methods as well. I observed how the government's assumptions, behaviors and beliefs combined with the MINED's supervisory focus and methods, encouraged teachers to follow values education orientations as given, and closed spaces for teachers to address knowledge gaps they identified. This created a tension among teachers whose beliefs and understandings differed from those of the government. Section three addresses several key aspects of these parallels and tensions.

In chapter seven, I introduce eight widely shared beliefs about values that teachers, parents and officials discussed and used. These included beliefs that "everything moves from values" and "values make anything possible," to the content of beliefs systems like the core

rural value of *convivencia* or living in community. It also included shared values the government drew upon to complement its Sandinista and political focus, like Christian faith and what it means to be Nicaraguan (patriotism). A final set of shared beliefs that contradicted the GRUN's values focus was a widely held belief that the family was where children learned values, not the school and not from the government. With anti-values on the rise, many felt families were no longer fulfilling this crucial role. This opened the door to the government stepping in and demanding teachers support families by teaching government approved values and values-in-action activities. I finish this chapter looking at several contested beliefs about the GRUN's values education that some teachers shared. To protect individual teachers, I quote public opposition figures and the media to highlight perspectives teachers shared privately.

In chapter eight, I analyze how teachers experienced the MINED waterfall in relation to knowledge and knowledge gaps it transmitted. This experience was critical to teacher decisions regarding if, how, when and with whom they implemented required values actions – and other content teaching. I chose to focus on teacher negotiations of knowledge and knowledge gaps in relation to two orientations: the use of cross-curricular pillars and the Integrated School Nutrition Program. These two examples highlight challenges teachers faced in both understanding the transformed MINED curriculum and how to use it. With the cross-curricular pillars, the MINED ordered teachers to copy each pillar that appeared in each unit of each content area of the teacher program (a minor number of pillars). The MINED did not provide training on how to put the cross-curricular pillars into practice. While most teachers complied with the letter of the orientation, I never observed a teacher integrating the content of one pillar into her instruction. With the PINE program, every teacher viewed it as critical – but not for the same reasons the government cited in its discourse. Teachers often understood the PINE program components differently and implemented it according to their understandings, administrative skills, material resources and other objectives.

In chapter 9, I look at how teachers negotiated competing beliefs systems in their daily classroom practice. One clear example of teacher agency within the confines of the waterfall was teacher insistence on “the talk” as their main values education method to address the onset of anti-values in schools, classrooms and communities. Their priority for values education was not to involve students and families in the government's programs and

campaigns. Teachers learned “the talk” from what they had lived for eleven years as students. They insisted it was extremely effective and replicated it each day in a one-way conversation with students that focused on student behaviors, often in reference to their responsibilities as students to gain their right to an education. It was never about government programs and campaigns, was never included in verbal values orientations from officials, and was not formally approved by the MINED. The very few times I observed teachers instructing students about values content in the classroom, they used the transmission method of copy-memorize-repeat that they used for most academic content – a method approved by MINED officials privately and condemned vociferously in public.

In chapter 9, I return to the importance of a strong belief system the government, MINED and teachers used in all values education conversations and official values activities at schools: political party identity and beliefs about Ortega, Murillo and their national project. Though not considered a teacher belief of importance in the teacher beliefs literature, I show how this was vital to understanding Nicaraguan teachers’ practices in values education.

Though each chapter from four through nine highlights a specific aspect of overlapping beliefs and knowledge systems related to teacher practice, all factors cited functioned at the same time in teachers’ daily professional and personal lives. This cannot be understated. Understanding how teachers juggle physical and psycho-social macro and micro contexts at the same time adds to one’s understanding of the complexity of teacher practice. It helps identify the many overlapping and often contradictory beliefs and knowledge systems teachers must negotiate to do their job. It also highlights joint responsibilities for teacher teaching and student learning, including policy makers, education leaders at national, state and municipal levels, and all stakeholders at the local level. Rather than focus on individual teacher beliefs and practice out of context, a broader contextualized focus and understanding can contribute in a deeper way to improving aspects of the entire education system in which teachers work, including individual teaching and student learning.

The analysis provided by this study helps reorient a common focus of blaming individual teachers (and teachers as a group) for low student learning. Instead its psycho-social understanding of how macro and micro contexts and their many interacting components and people interact and influence each other provides a different framework.

This systems approach unmask the erroneous nature of an “accountability movement” that individualizes responsibility for teaching and learning. It seeks to study and blame the weaknesses of a national and local education system, and its many shared and systemic responsibilities, at the feet of each individual teacher. My conclusion chapter touches upon this briefly. I also cite practical gains made for teacher professional development from this psycho-social perspective that combines the study and understanding of overlapping macro and micro contexts. PD best practices include a long-term commitment to participants and beginning from current teacher beliefs and knowledge to support conceptual and behavioral change. Those best practices segue nicely with an ethnographic approach to understanding teachers and the system in which they work – and how to support multiple stakeholder and systems changes to increase student learning.

Chapter Seven

Values Education: Shared and Contested Beliefs in Overlapping Contexts

Sandinista Values and Shared Beliefs to Transform Society One Person at a Time

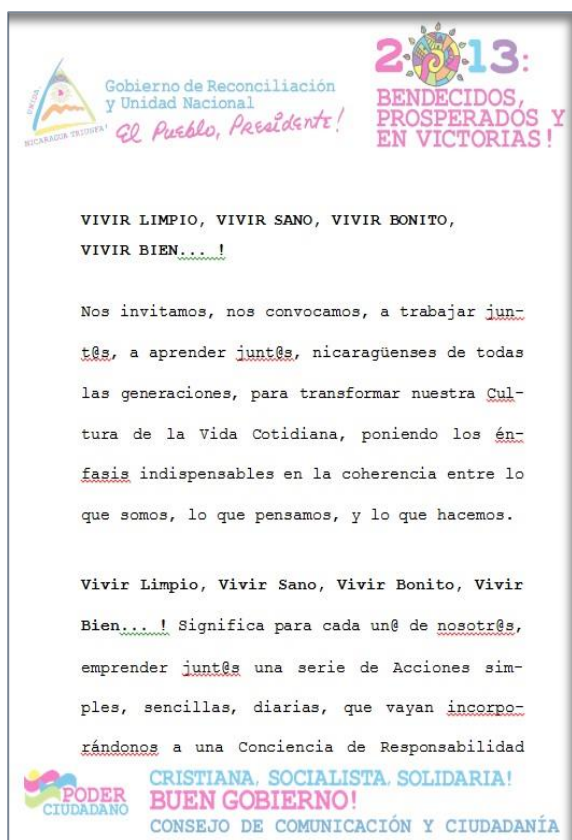


Photo 8. Cover page of First Lady Murillo's Basic Guide to her "Live Pretty" Campaign, January 2013.

First Lady Murillo's "Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well!" Campaign was a massive escalation of the GRUN's already high-intensity values regimen. It served as an umbrella for injecting values into all GRUN discourse from every slogan, announcement and government agency name to all actions in government programs, projects, commemorations (of Sandinista heroes and revolutionary events), and national campaigns. When invoking values and "Live Pretty," Murillo and other officials reminded Nicaraguans that the government's role was to inspire people to "transform our culture of daily life," to create an active citizenry that "plac[ed] indispensable coherency between who we are, what we think and what we do" (Murillo, 2013).

To achieve this coherency, the government saturated its public servants, Sandinista cadre

and the general population with "a formula and many formulas" and "a series of easy, simple, daily Actions" using "a Conscience of Shared and Complementary Responsibility" (Murillo, 2013).

Top national officials designed and oversaw dissemination of orientations regarding all local values education implementation, including "Live Pretty." They began from a Sandinista ideal and vision that officials insisted every Nicaraguan shared. This shared

dream, Murillo contended, would lead people to act, to “embark together” to “recreate...the Country, the Society, the Community, the Family and the Human Being...for [the] Good. For the Better” (Murillo, 2013, p. 2). Citizen participation involved following government formulas and orientations that prescribed coordinated actions that Murillo described as “an essential contribution to a Better World that among all of us we are obligated to make possible”¹⁵⁶ (p. 2).

The Nicaraguan people were the guarantor and greatest resource to achieve societal transformations, while values were the foundation and motivational engine that guided them. Which values and what actions to implement were disseminated by the Sandinista Party and GRUN officials. “Live Pretty” and all the GRUN’s projects encouraged people to embrace Sandinista values and an accompanying “life strategy that all Nicaraguans should adopt” (Murillo, 2013). Officials talked daily about shared norms of *convivencia* (living in community) and shared goals of combatting anti-values with values, restoring basic rights to all, and respecting life, mothers, the Mother Homeland and Mother Earth. In almost every point of her 14-point “Live Pretty” plan, Murillo mentioned cleanliness, religiosity, *convivencia*, solidarity and order (defined as compliance with authorities). Values served as the glue for coherency, like unity serving to align personal goals, actions and thoughts within one self and with others. Less publicly, top officials sought to use values education to align and consolidate their ensemble of programs and projects into a massive grassroots movement of local community residents who enacted whatever GRUN officials ordered, or in GRUN language “oriented” or “facilitated.”

Top MINED and Sandinista Party officials from national, state and municipal offices were tasked to coordinate 55,000 teachers and many thousands more local Sandinista cadre (i.e., Sandinista Youth members, local Sandinista committee members, and community Cabinet members) as they disseminated values information and implemented values education actions locally. Though national, state and municipal leaders and staff were all Sandinista appointees, the army they coordinated on the ground in every local neighborhood and rural community was not. It had a wide variety of actors, particularly among the teacher

¹⁵⁶ Emprender juntos...para recrear...el Pais, la Sociedad, la Comunidad, la Familia y el Ser Humano...para Bien. Para Mejor. Para que Nicaragua continúe siendo Ejemplo Iluminado, de Idiosincrasia, Identidad, Inteligencia, Sensibilidad y Prácticas, que desde el corazón representen contribución esencial al Mundo Mejor que entre tod@s estamos obligad@s a hacer posible. [Capital letters and all other punctuation is from the original.]

population. Some identified as Sandinistas and Sandinista sympathizers while others said they were not political, indifferent (apathetic) or anti-politics and politicians. Of those who were actively anti-Daniel, some were Sandinista (e.g., Sandinista Renovator Movement members) while others were vocally and actively anti-Sandinista (e.g., Liberal Party members). In part due to this variation and in part despite it, Murillo and GRUN officials transmitted “formulas” and “easy, simple, daily Actions” to teachers and local Sandinista Party members to disseminate and implement with local residents – all steeped in Sandinista values. As part of ordaining teachers government spokespeople and community activists (as part of their professional responsibilities), the GRUN expected teachers to use Sandinista values discourse and implement GRUN-designed values education actions. To soften its overtly Sandinista messaging and objectives, GRUN officials incorporated widely shared Christian and patriotic values and beliefs.

Teachers modified combinations of shared, institutional and personal beliefs, knowledge and values to understand GRUN beliefs and values education – and to decide if, how and why they enacted values education orientations. Combinations included broad, macro belief systems (about political identity, teaching and learning, patriotism, and Christianity) in conjunction with beliefs about teaching values (e.g., values and academics; teacher, student, family and GRUN roles), assessing values learning, values content teachers were ordered to teach (e.g., gender equity), and each mandated action. Teachers diversified the combinations of beliefs in relation to overlapping psycho-social contexts, physical settings, and personal experiences. For example, when the GRUN explicitly politicized values education, many teachers prioritized use of their political party identities and beliefs (about Ortega, Murillo, and Sandinista objectives) to understand and act upon what they perceived as “politicized” values education orientations. Teacher implementation of each mandate and kind of values mandate varied whether it was a Sandinista or patriotic commemoration, a cross-curricular values pillar integrated into academic planning and instruction, or a school program steeped in values discourse, like the Integrated School Nutrition Program (PINE).

In this chapter, I focus on macro contexts of shared societal and institutional beliefs and knowledge about values and values education, as discussed by teachers, parents, acquaintances, small business people, and MINED officials – virtually everyone with whom I

interacted. I begin with a description and analysis of eight widely shared societal beliefs regarding values and values education that were a constant in daily life: in conversations, on streets and buses, in classrooms and parent meetings, and in government discourse, policies and actions. I then turn to government beliefs about values and values education, including its role in values teaching in schools, and how GRUN and MINED officials communicated these to teachers in its waterfall of verbal orientations and PD spaces. I use the “Live Pretty” campaign as an example of GRUN beliefs and values, and then focus on beliefs regarding values in schooling. I finish analyzing this panorama of macro psycho-social contexts by looking at contested beliefs expressed by people in organized opposition to Ortega (i.e., political parties, print media). The panorama of beliefs that people used in different settings represents the broad spectrum of teacher beliefs understandings and actions regarding values education in their multigrade classrooms and schools. It provides important information to understand how (and sometimes why) teachers chose to implement certain aspects of values education and ignore others.

Shared Beliefs Regarding Values and Values Teaching-Learning Processes

Nicaraguans cited eight values and beliefs about values that were particularly salient and widely shared among teachers, families and MINED officials. These include two beliefs about values in general (“everything moves from values” and “values make anything possible”); a shared belief in living in community (*convivir*) for survival and co-development; shared belief systems regarding two prominent national and individual identities, “proud to be Nicaraguan” and “Christian values make us who we are”; beliefs regarding the family in values education; and beliefs about anti-values that made recuperating values so imperative and provided an opening for the GRUN to create a principal role in values educators. Teachers, as a professional microcosm of broader Nicaraguan society, shared these beliefs. To protect teacher and family confidentiality, I directly quote individual participants when they expressed their beliefs, particularly any concerns or critiques, in public spaces. I quote public figures who echoed teacher and family concerns expressed in private settings.

“Everything moves from values.” Nicaraguans I met from many walks of life agreed that values were the heartbeat and spiritual force behind human development and individual transformation. As one teacher explained, “everything moves [happens] from

values” (MINED INFORMA, June 24, 2103). The government deftly packaged itself as a “National Reconciliation and Unity Government” (GRUN) with a “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” human development project; all its programs, campaigns and government agencies were tightly wrapped in values discourse. Restoration of rights to all, particularly the poor who were denied their basic rights for generations, was a constant theme. The GRUN restored people’s rights to a free, public education and health care; individual and national sovereignty; protection from natural and human-made disasters; care and protection of women/mothers, the Mother Homeland and Mother Earth; basic services (i.e., potable water, electricity); food security and nutrition; infant development; cultural and patriotic expressions; personal growth, self-esteem and self-care. One and usually several of these were constant themes in the GRUN’s values education. Values, officials reminded people, were the foundation of every GRUN project. They inspired all GRUN efforts to transform Nicaraguan society, and GRUN officials used them to inspire people to join them and participate. Without values, the GRUN and its people could not achieve their mission to create a better present and future for all Nicaraguans.

One example of how values provided meaning and incentive to act was in the GRUN’s mandate to restore the right to a free, public education. This right had only been offered once under the previous Sandinista revolutionary Junta in the 1980s. Ortega restored that right his first day in office once re-elected in 2007, making education free and public once again to tackle the challenge of 1 million school-age children not attending school. Achieving universal education, Ortega’s goal, could only be met through values enactment by every Nicaraguan. Nationally, GRUN officials could do little on their own. Their role was to coordinate with people in every community to organize massive participation (a value) to ensure all school-age children were enrolled in school (another basic value). For the GRUN and most people, this right was a “shared responsibility” (a GRUN value and official model). The MINED provided school infrastructure, curricular materials and teacher preparation; teachers and community members enrolled students; teachers taught 200 instructional days according to the school calendar; and students attended classes, took notes and studied with the help of older siblings and adults to learn content and pass exams – and move to the next grade.

Life-long learning for children and adults was a related value that the GRUN enacted with its citizenry on the basis of shared rights and responsibilities: GRUN officials, teachers, local Sandinista activists, and community leaders worked together to put this fundamental value into action. In the middle of each school year for one week the MINED ordered rural multigrade teachers and urban high school students to go house to house in every community and identify all adults who had not had the opportunity to learn to read or write. Each school aggregated their information and sent it to the Municipal MINED offices where pedagogic advisors aggregated the information into one municipal report to send to the state MINED offices. In record time, the information went up the chain of command to national leaders who within a period of several weeks designed and communicated how it would confront that year's literacy challenges. Using rallies that commemorated the Great National Literacy Crusade of 1980, adult literacy educators and Sandinista Party leaders incentivized high school students and trained adult literacy educators to teach small groups of adults how to read and write for the last few months of each year. In this and other coordinated efforts, the GRUN worked with teachers and residents in every community to ensure each child's and adult's right to a free, public education. Together, they put values into action and reinforced the shared belief that everything moved from values.

A third piece of the multi-faceted effort to restore the right to an education was the need to address the high percentage of elementary school "repeaters," students who failed at least one grade and thus had to repeat the entire year to catch up. Repeaters weakened GRUN attempts to restore the right to an education and achieve universal primary education because most dropped out while repeating a grade or soon after, a cycle that contributed to low enrollment in upper elementary and high school. Los Coquitos had 50% repeaters in first grade while El Roble had 37.5% in its first-second grade classroom. As part of the Shared Responsibility model, the GRUN designated Sandinista youth to provide all repeaters from grades 1-11 in their communities extra work over three weeks in January and February. In the first week of February right before the new school year began, the young Sandinistas-briefly-turned-teachers provided each student a final exam in whatever content area(s) they had not passed the previous December. Students who passed this second final exam continued to the next grade the following week.

These coordinated efforts – designed by top officials, disseminated by their mid-level counterparts, and implemented by those on the ground in local communities – were examples of how the GRUN coordinated often weekly actions they deemed values enactment to restore fundamental rights long denied to the majority of the population.¹⁵⁷ Citizen participation (a value) contributed to individual, family and community development (a value). Values-enactment included a steady and coordinated discourse among all leaders; simply designed procedures for massive, unified implementation in every community around the country; and a series of synchronized actions over time. This values package effectively saturated Nicaraguans with official values ideas and beliefs, including those widely shared that everything moves from values and values make anything possible. Everyone who held these two values and participated in GRUN projects would help make the miracle of societal transformation a reality, no matter their education level, knowledge, skills or experience.

“Values make anything possible.” Many Nicaraguans talked about how a person’s values guided how s/he understood the world, humanity and thus how one interacted with others. Values were inseparable from human behavior. Christian beliefs guided one’s thoughts and actions, “and one is as a person, their essence,” a teacher explained. Similarly, patriotic beliefs guided one’s love for the homeland and patriotic actions. Values regulated human behavior by connecting how people thought and believed with how they acted or behaved. “Respect and being respectful are the same,” Emilia taught her students, “the same as responsibility and being responsible; solidarity and being in solidarity; honesty and being honest.” With values and behaviors inextricably bound, values made all actions possible.

A professor from the National Nicaraguan Autonomous University (and member of the National Council of Universities) argued that a person’s beliefs in values guided their actions to overcome any and every obstacle using the example of love. “Whoever works with love,” Naseré Habel López (2014) wrote, “is happy and feels realized. Those who work without love, feel work like a heavy load s/he is obligated to carry.”¹⁵⁷ When he applied his argument to teachers, he wrote that the value “love of teaching” automatically provided a teacher with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach with quality. “Whoever has the vocation to educate, will teach with quality. She does not allow mediocrity, nor things poorly

¹⁵⁷ Quien trabaja con amor, es feliz y se siente realizado. Quienes trabajan sin amor, sienten el trabajo como una carga pesada que está obligado a llevar.

done. She looks for perfection, cultivates in her students a permanent thirst to know, improve and overcome.”¹⁵⁸ López highlighted the shared belief that everything moved from values – and the motivation values provided its believer to do anything, to make anything possible.

According to López and others, a teacher with vocation and values “is not the parrot that repeats what s/he learned so her students repeat the same thing by memory” but rather a teacher with vocation. A teacher’s values would help her innovate and create plans as per MINED orders but not implement them as MINED officials and colleagues expected. In practice, her values should provide her not only the strength to *not* comply with the MINED, but also the knowledge needed to not copy her already twice-copied daily lesson plan onto the classroom board for students to copy into their notebooks, to learn on their own outside of class, and to represent word-for-word on a written exam. By acting on values, López wrote, a teacher was automatically able to “recreate knowledge in function of student interest and comprehension”¹⁵⁹ (López, 2014). Under this set of beliefs that values made anything possible, a teacher’s values guided extraordinary (but unspecified) behaviors not seen in most, if any, classrooms. Under this logic, the primary cause of low quality education in Nicaragua was “not in the programs of study, nor in teacher salaries, nor in the professional training they receive, nor in the didactic materials and school buildings. It is in lack of vocation on the part of the teachers”¹⁶⁰ (López, 2014). For López and others, an individual teacher with strong beliefs in values could overcome all obstacles, including knowledge gaps, lack of material resources, and MINED mandates that detracted from teaching and learning in schools. The teacher who did not overcome the many daily obstacles faced in an education system in crisis was personally and exclusively to blame.

Fausto and Adriana – life-long Sandinistas, principals, teacher trainers and nucleus facilitators (of two different generations) – agreed. “We have stayed with memorizing, with reproduction,” Adriana explained, “...and we only evaluate reproduction of knowledge, the

¹⁵⁸ Quien tiene vocación de educador, enseña con calidad. No admite mediocridad, ni cosas mal hechas. Busca la perfección, cultiva en sus alumnos sed permanente por saber y superarse.

¹⁵⁹ Un profesor con vocación no es el loro que repite lo que aprendió, para que sus alumnos repitan lo mismo de memoria, sino que recrea el conocimiento en función del interés y la comprensión del estudiante.

¹⁶⁰ Al respecto considero, que la causa primera de la baja calidad de la educación media nicaragüense no está en los programas de estudio, ni en los salarios de los docentes, ni en la capacitación profesional que reciben, ni en los materiales didácticos y edificios escolares. Está en la falta de vocación de los maestros.

written part.”¹⁶¹ The effects on student learning were devastating: “the kids stagnate, they don’t have the freedom, or another opportunity to process the knowledge acquired in a different way.”¹⁶² Because the students “come adapted to that system of reproductive evaluation...when the child or student confronts a new evaluation system s/he tends to fail academically because s/he isn’t prepared for that kind of situation.”¹⁶³ This made teacher values and innovation more critical, and Adriana suggested that “we as teachers should use other strategies that help the boy to think, reflect, make a judgment. That I think is more productive and the young people like it more.”¹⁶⁴ In the same conversation, she admitted “we are almost totally in the situation where every teacher depends completely on copying and dictation.”¹⁶⁵ Adriana and Fausto criticized their colleagues who attended PD and did not “take what we learn to the classroom,” Adriana lamented.

We don’t have that initiative, that discipline, those values, to share or apply what we learn in the classroom... We even sometimes go [to PD] because it is required, but we don’t appropriate what we have there. We should appropriate it to implement it. But very few of us do that.¹⁶⁶

Change, she argued, required *sensibilización* because “the attitudinal part influences a lot, as do certain values to change attitudes, and that’s the first part, the *sensibilización* we do as facilitators and school principals.”¹⁶⁷

These beliefs informed a common conclusion: teachers who did not overcome the many obstacles in their profession did not possess values. This allowed government officials, parents and teachers to blame individual teachers (not themselves) for the nation’s low

¹⁶¹ Hemos quedado mucho en la parte de memorizar, la parte de reproducción. Cuando nosotros nos quedamos en esa parte de memorizar, evaluamos únicamente en reproducir el conocimiento, la parte escrita.

¹⁶² Es como el chavalo se estanca, como no tienen libertad de, o una o otra oportunidad de, de, de...podemos decir de ... de procesar de otra manera el conocimiento que ha adquirido.

¹⁶³ Pero como vienen ya adaptados a ese sistema de, de evaluación reproductivo, entonces, cuando el niño se enfrenta, o estudiante se enfrenta a un nuevo sistema de evaluación entonces se, se, tiende a fracasar, tiende a fracasar académicamente porque no está preparado para, para ese tipo de situación.

¹⁶⁴ Entonces, nosotros como maestros deberíamos de utilizar otras estrategias que lleva al chavalo a pensar, a reflexionar, a emitir un juicio. Y eso yo creo que eso es más productivo y al joven le gusta más.

¹⁶⁵ Es que estamos casi totalmente en la situación en donde cada maestro y maestra depende casi totalmente en copiar y dictado.

¹⁶⁶ Lo que nosotros allí estamos aprendiendo también debemos llevarlo a la aula de clase. Pero no tenemos esa (pausa), como le dijera (pausa), iniciativa seria, o esa disciplina de compartir o de aplicarlo lo que aprendemos en el aula de clase.Incluso, a veces venimos como por requisito, pero que no nos apropiamos de lo que allí tenemos. Deberíamos de apropiar para implementarlo. Pero pocos lo hacemos.

¹⁶⁷ Pero, este, la parte actitudinal influye mucho, así también los valores para cambiar actitudes, y eso es la primera parte, la sensibilización. Al maestro es de sensibilizarlo. Y eso es lo que hacemos nosotros los facilitadores y directores escolares.

performance in education (some years the lowest in Latin America). It allowed the government to deny any responsibility for the crisis in education and instead celebrate each accomplishment as it fulfilled its role: each school built, etc. Though low student performance occurred across all grades, geographical regions and income levels,^{lxvi} the above beliefs allowed people to blame a generalized and systemic crisis on individual teachers who lacked values. Teachers who were unmotivated or did not teach well lacked values, and that was the central crisis in education because values made anything possible.

A core rural value: Convivir or living in community. Another widely shared belief was in a way of life and being: living in community known commonly as *convivir*. People enacted the value *convivir* in gatherings, frequent and random acts of kindness, and a way of life that supported each other to survive, overcome obstacles, and celebrate victories. *Convivir* (the verb) and *convivencia* (the noun) referred to social relations based on beliefs in and actions of “living life together” (Trinidad Galván, 2015, Introduction, Convivencia as Methodology section, para. 1) in constant recognition of one’s “mutual humanity” (para. 6). It included a culture of sharing with others, often in social gatherings, as well as solidarity with others and looking after each other in community. To many Nicaraguans, the GRUN’s “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” project promoted a shared understanding of *convivir*: being willing to take on responsibility (shared responsibility), working individually and in cooperation (participation and protagonism), offering mutual assistance to achieve a shared goal for the common good (solidarity). It included looking out for others, particularly those with greater needs and fewer resources. This proposed way of life segued seamlessly with rural beliefs regarding *convivir* and *convivencia* which aligned with Christian beliefs and teachings to opt for the poor, to literally and figuratively walk with the poor, elderly, disabled, and less fortunate as a lifestyle and lifelong commitment.

Convivencia – ongoing, solidarity-based social relations – was integral to rural survival and development. It was a way of life: a way of being, thinking and acting. Community gatherings marked family events as community-wide (i.e., births, weddings, funerals). Other gatherings brought people together regularly: sports events, ecumenical and patriotic holidays, celebrations of national/international days. In addition to *convivios* (social gatherings), living in community included an unstated commitment to take care of each other, particularly those who had less or were stricken by illness or sudden hardship.

Neighbors who fought and feuded during normal times often supported each other through rough times. These solidarity actions – a normal and necessary part of daily life – made sure everyone survived cycles of challenge when income and food could not be found or bought, when someone was ill and needed extra attention or died, when natural disasters struck.

The second graders in Ambrosia's class underscored this core value when we discussed the Aesop's fable, "*The Ant and the Grasshopper*." In the story, the ant and the grasshopper live in the same community and spend most days together outdoors until winter. During the spring, summer and fall, the ant spends each day collecting food she lugs home to store for winter. As she passes by the grasshopper on her many trips to and from the house, the grasshopper sings to her. She advises him to stop singing and begin to collect food, that once winter arrives he will have nothing to eat. The grasshopper continues to sing to his friend as she works and advises her to not work so hard, to stop and rest every once in a while, to enjoy life.

When winter comes and snow begins to fall, the ant retreats into her humble hole, well fed and warm. Outside, the grasshopper suffers terrible cold and hunger. He pleads with the ant for help, knocking repeatedly on her door. She refuses, reminding him that he did not take her advice to work over the summer and now, as she predicted, he was paying for his decision. If he had heeded her advice, she scolds him through her closed door, he would not be hungry. Maybe his suffering will teach him a lesson. The moral of the tale is to work hard and you will succeed (the ant). Secondarily, it teaches that those who are lazy (implied) will face hard times and even death (the grasshopper).

After I read the story aloud to the second graders I asked them for their thoughts and none understood the story as Aesop intended. The overarching message they gained from the story was that the ant was "bad" and "very bad." One said, "The ant should have given the grasshopper her food," to which another asked, "Yeah, she had enough food, so why didn't she give him some?" Many agreed. The ant refused to share what she had with someone less fortunate "and that is a sin," a girl declared with a frown. "God says share with others," another student said. I reminded them the ant had worked all summer storing away for the long winter while the grasshopper had preferred to sing and not work. "The grasshopper brought her happiness while she worked," a child responded, and others agreed.

One student compared the ant to wealthy people¹⁶⁸ who did not help those in need. This opened a wave of examples: a contractor who didn't pay a family member for their day of work in the capital; another who got paid less than promised in Costa Rica; a buyer who didn't pay enough for the family's crops. All stories ended with families not having enough money to buy food they needed – not because they did not work but because of unscrupulous buyers and bosses. Another student shouted out, "It's like my uncle! He gets drunk a lot, but we always give him food. We're not going to tell him to leave, or not give him food when we all eat!"¹⁶⁹ This comment inspired a barrage of similar comments. Students gave numerous examples of family members who had little or nothing, and how no matter what they did they deserved to be looked after. That's what you did. The general agreement was that the ant had food and she should share it with those who don't have any. Most of the children knew hunger daily during the dry season, and each year the rainy season began later than normal. We were in the sixth month of dry conditions that day. Many kids and families survived this time of the year through *convivencia*, helping each other during good times and bad.

The unanimity of the message from the second graders was overwhelming. *Convivencia* was a way of life, a belief they had all learned and practiced by 7 years of age. They held a shared belief in their responsibility to help those most in need and each other. *Convivir* was how rural families had lived for generations. It contradicted much of Aesop's individualist, work ethic, meritocracy values. People lived through cooperation, solidarity and taking care of each other. Those who had more helped those with less "because you know that one day you may have less and need someone's help," parents often said. "Wealthy people like to hold onto their possessions," one mother explained, "and they ignore those in need. We are nobody to them. But they forget. You can't take all those possessions with you to heaven. And when you get up there, we all are equal."¹⁷⁰ This was one reason why the "Christian" and "Solidarity" part of the GRUN's slogan and values projects resonated with many Nicaraguans. It was also why many people in the countryside were not worried about the "Socialist" part of the GRUN project. If it meant helping the poor and

¹⁶⁸ Los ricos

¹⁶⁹ Es como mi tío. El anda bolo todo el tiempo, pero siempre le damos comida. No vamos a echarle a la calle o no darle comida cuando nosotros estamos comiendo.

¹⁷⁰ A los ricos les encanta mantener a sus cositas materiales e ignoran a los pobres y mas necesitados. Nosotros no somos nadie para ellos. Pero se olvidan. Nadie puede llevar sus cositas cuando van al cielo a estar con el Señor. Cuando llegas allí, todos somos iguales. Eso a ellos se les olvida.

sharing limited resources among everyone, they supported it. It fit within their daily life values and actions, particularly the value of *convivir*.

“Christian values make us who we are.” In her daily messages to the nation, Murillo regularly used Christian references, teachings and assertions that God supported the GRUN and her husband. Teachers and parents referenced God’s support and guidance as well. In 2013, Murillo expressed her pride in Nicaragua being “the only country in the world that declares itself Christian”^{lxvii} (Equipo Envio, March 2013). People expressed their Christian identity, Christian values and faith in God in daily conversations. Nicaraguans regularly identified themselves as religious and their country as a deeply religious people: “a people proud of our history, our work, our creativity, talent and tradition...our culture, foods, religiosity,” a people who sought to “guard this legacy” (Murillo, 2013, p. 8).

By 2005 (last available statistics), 58.5% of Nicaraguans identified as Roman Catholic while 23.2% identified as Protestant or Evangelical, including Baptists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and smaller, lesser known Christian churches (CIA World Factbook, 2016). Since the 1400s, the Catholic Church held almost exclusive moral sway in the Spanish-speaking western part of the country and a strong political voice in government (Berentzen, 2012; Kampwirth, 2008; Morris, 2010; Pérez-Baltodano, 2012). In the mid-1900s, Evangelical churches began proselytizing in isolated rural areas where the Catholic Church had a weak physical presence. In schools and among teachers, Catholicism and evangelical Christian beliefs cohabitated as one shared commitment to God and Christian values; each was respected as being integral to each person’s life, being and behaviors.

Religious faith dominated daily and seasonal routines.^{lxviii} During April and May each year, Catholics and Christians held one to three hour prayer vigils in different homes each day, praying for rain. They thanked God for the opportunity to plant and harvest the food that would provide many of them with their principal sustenance for the year and possibly some income. As the rainy season arrived later and later in 2012 and 2013 – and as drought and dry weeks during the rainy season became a norm – prayer vigils became longer and more intense, louder and more desperate in people’s calls for God’s help and mercy to relieve their suffering, fear, and disquiet. “Water is life,” people said. “Without water,” a mother explained, “the crops die, the animals die, and we die.”¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Agua es vida. Sin agua, los cultivos se mueren, los animales se mueren, y nosotros nos morimos.

Teachers and MINED officials integrated religious faith into schooling. Talk of Christian values, Biblical stories and classroom prayers were common. Classroom prayers included thanks to God for the many things he provided in life: the sun that gave light and warmth, the air that gave us life, each child's parents for providing guidance and protection, and each child's teacher for helping them learn. "For whom are we here?" Pridi began class one morning. Why does the sun exist? Why do we have trees, mountains and rivers? Because of God. God gives us these things and we thank him every day for all he gives us, for our teachers, for our school, for learning." Before she could continue, Reina interrupted and the prayer was over. Reina led similar prayers.

Dear God, we give you thanks for everything you have given us – the sun, the school, and the opportunity to learn. We ask for clarity in our minds and thoughts, to learn a lot today. Dear God, we ask you to pardon us for our sins, our insolence, our lack of respect and we promise to behave today in class. We also ask for strength to learn and study, to pay attention, and to treat each other with respect.¹⁷²

Some content of prayers echoed the advice talks teachers gave students throughout the day, though they emphasized giving thanks (for the school in the community, the opportunity to learn and grow) and clarity or strength to focus on their studies and be on their best behavior.

Principals began school gatherings and events (i.e., parent meetings) with a prayer, while facilitators included opening prayers in professional development. These prayers were similar as those in classrooms, with a few additions. Teachers thanked God for giving them the opportunity to come together to refresh their learning and update their knowledge, to share with colleagues and improve their practice in the classroom.

Lord, we give thanks for the Ministry and the government of *Comandante Ortega* and all they do for teachers and all students and families in our communities. We ask for your help in our meeting, so we work well, we listen, understand and that all of us participate with positive attitudes and contributions that strengthen our work and prosperity in our school, families, communities and our nation.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Diosito, le damos gracias por todo nos ha dado – el sol, la escuela, y la oportunidad de aprender. Le pedimos claridad en nuestras mentes y pensamientos, para poder aprender mucho hoy. Diosito, le pedimos perdón por nuestros pecados y le prometemos comportarnos bien hoy en la clase. También, le pedimos fuerza para aprender y estudiar, poner atención, y tratarnos uno a otro con respeto.

¹⁷³ Señor, le damos gracias por el Ministerio y el gobierno de Comandante Ortega y los esfuerzos que hacen por los maestros y todos los estudiantes y familias en nuestras comunidades. Pedimos su apoyo en esta reunión, para que trabajaremos bien, que escuchemos, entendamos y que todos y todas participamos con actitudes y aportes positivos que fortalecerá el trabajo y prosperidad en nuestras escuelas, nuestras familias, nuestras comunidades, y nuestra nación.

The prayers ended with a commitment to maintain a good attitude, to be motivated, to pay attention to the PD facilitator (or school principal in parent meetings), and to respect each other. Some asked for help in working quickly to get out early or on time, and get home to family. During professional development teachers talked regularly about the importance of their faith in understanding their students and families, and guiding their classroom actions. During monthly planning sessions, one multigrade teacher in a small group serenaded her colleagues with religious songs from her church while she copied the next month's plan, often telling stories of church activities or a sermon she particularly liked.

Religious faith – Catholic and Christian – was the foundation of most non-governmental organizations working in education in the San José de la Montaña region. An international Christian group paired every elementary school student with a “godparent” from the U.S. or Europe. The group also provided some schools with children's literature and informational books, U.S. Spanish-language (mostly) textbooks, and some preventative health care. Towards the end of 2013, they donated a religious curriculum with a teacher program guide, textbook and student workbooks for every child to El Roble. These were the first workbooks the students owned. Ambrosia and Regalia told me the materials were “excellent” and “something I want to use every day because they bring everything in one package.” Regalia noted it was strictly religious content – “about Jesus' life and teachings without anything political.”¹⁷⁴

“Making homeland” (slogan) together: Proud to be Nicaraguan. The MINED reinforced pride in being Nicaraguan and in its curriculum “promoted the rescue of the historical and cultural legacy of our country, including the study of heroes...and the formation of values” (MINED INFORMA, November 20, 2013). As with all values education, the focus was not just on places, dates and people but on “motivating the gusto and love of our history...and historical values of our country, like love and respect for our heroes and martyrs” (MINED INFORMA, November 20, 2013). The Sandinistas developed history leagues with names like “I Make Homeland” (MINED INFORMA, September 13, 2013) and a series of school competitions (municipal, state and national) for which students “memorized questionnaires” (MINED INFORMA, September 2, 2013) to learn about

¹⁷⁴ Son excelentes. Son algo que quisiera utilizar todos los días por que se juntan todo en un sólo paquete. Son sobre la vida de Jesús y sus enseñanzas sin nada política.

“historic events that transformed the country” while recognizing “what is true love of homeland and defense of sovereignty” (MINED INFORMA, September 2, 2013). Students studied and celebrated a combination of Independence Day and Sandinista heroes “with the purpose of rescuing and promoting national identity and cultural values” including “courage and bravery, among others” (MINED INFORMA, September 2, 2013).

In its curricular transformation, the MINED included “National and Cultural Identity” (MINED, 2009, p. 116) as a cross-curricular pillar whose components included “national and patriotic symbols,” “natural, historic and cultural patrimony,” “national history,” and “interculturality” (p. 116-120). TEPCE facilitators dictated monthly values to teachers as well as what Sandinista heroes and events to celebrate in the upcoming month. September, for example, was “Homeland Month” with Independence Day and several anti-U.S. imperialism commemorations. The other ten months of the school year included patriotic actions to commemorate historic people and events, mostly Sandinista and renamed “National Heroes” (p. 118). Accompanying patriotic values included sacrifice for your country and fighting for national sovereignty. Commemorations were often accompanied by Ortega’s anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist messaging to juxtapose opposition parties’ neoliberal, imperialist ideologies that worked against his dedication to human development and the Nicaraguan people. This hyper Sandinista emphasis became an integral part of the official definition of being patriotic.

Nicaragua had several cases pending in the international courts with Costa Rica, Colombia and other neighbors. Costa Rica captured the greatest ire and patriotic chest-thumping of Nicaraguans from all walks of life. Many had personal experiences or close family working in Costa Rica where they made much less than Costa Ricans for the same work and were routinely treated like second class citizens. People were particularly incensed with Costa Rica’s creep into what everyone said was national territory through the San Juan River (the natural border between the two countries). With massive public support, Ortega ordered Sandinista Youth Brigades to maintain a constant presence on the Costa Rica-Nicaraguan border. One of the five national Sandinista Youth organizations, *Los Guardabarrancos* (the national bird), organized youth around environmental actions and protecting the homeland. They rotated “brigades” of more than 30 young people at a time to patrol the disputed border with Costa Rica on the San Juan River beginning in 2011, to

“work on projects such as reforestation and river dredging...[while] taught about homeland defense and border protection” (Rogers, 2012). This was one example of how the government combined values-beliefs with values-actions under its Nicaraguan-Sandinista flag.

Being patriotic included beliefs and actions geared to “value...and strengthen feelings of love and respect of the homeland and its symbols, as a form of expression of National Identity...to defend [the homeland] with patriotism as a contribution to the country” (MINED, 2009, p. 116). Murillo included love, respect, care and protection of Mother Earth as patriotic – and part of protecting the homeland – as was love, respect and protection of all women and mothers. She frequently referenced Mother Earth and Homeland as one, spirituality and patriotism linked with Mother Nature, and the interdependence of all living things. In schools, patriotism included cleaning the school and classrooms, helping each other learn, and other daily interactions and responsibilities. Like many GRUN values, officials related patriotic beliefs and actions to many other values, beliefs and actions as one aligned whole.

By combining patriotism and pride in being Nicaraguan with Sandinista values, the GRUN attracted people to join their efforts. The combination helped the GRUN walk a delicate line of defining a GRUN role in teaching values when Nicaraguan society strongly believed that the family played the main if not only role in teaching values to its young. I look at shared beliefs about roles in teaching values next.

The family is where children learn values. People spoke frequently and passionately about their belief that family was “the first school” (common phrase). Parents taught children values, forming¹⁷⁵ them into who they were, what they believed and how they acted. People learned or “appropriated [values] through the development of our lives” over time (MINED INFORMA, June 24, 2013). One mother explained it this way:

I am going to tell you something. Values and behavior..., aren’t learned at school but more at home where children are with their parents, the family, their brothers and sisters... That is where they learn values and behaviors. Because if you misbehave at home, you are going to misbehave at school... The child at home, that’s where he is

¹⁷⁵ Formando. The verb *formar* mean to educate through constant formation, highlighting social learning over time.

learning. Because if you say those bad words too much, the child learns them and will go say them at school.¹⁷⁶

Many parents and teachers placed the ultimate responsibility for a child who misbehaved on her or his parent. Anti-values and ensuing “bad” behaviors came from “a child’s upbringing, how in the way a child is raised,” another mother told me.

A professor and researcher at the Jesuit University agreed. Family was “the principal, vital influence” that “transmitted knowledge and values” to children as “a vital influence throughout life” and their “principal patrimony” (Gil, 2012). For Gil and many others, “Parents play a role of first order. Their educator role...configure[s] their [children’s] identity and personality, incorporating cognitive and emotional knowledge that prepares them for critical and effective citizen participation.” He likened the family to “a fundamental cell of identity, interaction and learning” that provided children “a broad heritage of cognitive and affective experiences” that were “the most valued” in a child’s development. Parents modeled attitudes and values each day “impregnating [children] with their identity, personality and character¹⁷⁷.” I heard similar arguments from parents and teachers. One’s identity, personality and character led to one’s actions into adulthood – and it all began with the family.

Many families fail to educate, contribute to “debauchery in everything.” Due to family disintegration and poverty, many families were unable to fulfill the important values teaching role in the same way they had in the past. During each PD session, teachers shared

¹⁷⁶ Le voy a decir una cosa. Los valores y el comportamiento...(pause), no se..., se aprende en la escuela pero mas en el hogar donde esta con sus padres, su familia, sus hermanos..., allí es donde aprende los valores y los comportamientos. Porque si usted es mal portada en la casa, va a ser mal portada en la escuela. [TR: Así dicen los maestros. Que a veces los niños vienen, los más chiquitos y los grandes, pero con palabrotas que uno no puede..., yo estaba asustada (laughing)]. Sí. Es que siempre el niño en la casa es donde aprende. Porque si usted dice aquellas palabrotas... exageradas, el niño las aprende y va a decirlas en la escuela y a la calle donde vaya. Donde aprenden es en la casa.

¹⁷⁷ Los padres y madres de familia juegan un rol de primer orden. Su papel educador también reviste gran complejidad, tanto al realizarlo en el hogar, como proyectándolo en el centro educativo de sus hijos, para configurar su identidad y personalidad, incorporando saberes cognitivos y emocionales que les preparen para una participación ciudadana crítica y efectiva. La familia constituye el espacio educativo por excelencia, en tanto los saberes y valores que transmite a sus hijos, constituirá el principal resorte vital a lo largo de su vida. Como célula fundamental de identidad, interacción y aprendizaje, representa el escenario privilegiado para proporcionar a los hijos un acervo amplio de experiencias afectivas y cognitivas. Esta educación no formal e informal representa el lado máspreciado del desarrollo de la niñez y juventud, por tener una impronta profunda en sus vidas. De ahí que las actitudes y valores que padres y madres modelen cada día ante sus hijos e hijas, se constituyen en su principal patrimonio, impregnándoles su identidad, personalidad y carácter.

stories about how family poverty affected children's values, including hygiene and attitudes towards school. An excerpt of one teacher description shared with colleagues is below:

They live in a cow corral. The mom works in tobacco, the dad with the cows, they come to school unbathed, sometimes they urinated in their sleep and their clothes stink of urine, the dad calls them at whatever hour to come eat, maybe once a day, because we don't have food because someone stole all the school's food because we don't have a secure place to store the food. When the mom comes in, in her beauty and enormity, she sits and wrings her hands about how misbehaved her kids are and how she doesn't know what to do. The grade book, when I send it home, comes back covered in poop, in cow poop. It's covered in cow shit! The kids tell me their mom tells them that neither of them learned to read or write and she hasn't died of hunger yet, so they won't either. Most of the time they don't copy the homework into their notebook, and when I do, they rip the page out in front of me, smiling.¹⁷⁸

As the teacher talked, her colleagues copied and nodded. Some added a word or phrase of support, recognition that they faced similar issues. Reina remembered one of her students.

I have a second grader whose parents don't help her at home at all. She doesn't read anything yet, and her older siblings don't even help her. When I told her to come sit by me to work because she had to do well on the exam coming up, she told me, 'I don't care. It doesn't matter how I do. No one hits me, no one scolds me. My mom tells me it's my thing to worry about.' So I asked her what her dad thought, since he had been more involved in the school, and she said her dad has no reason to get involved [in her schooling] because she doesn't live with him. She lives with her mom.¹⁷⁹

With values on the decline, Nicaraguans feared that anti-values were taking over the country, particularly among Nicaragua's youth (under 24 years old) that comprised the majority of the population. Parents talked about these concerns daily, citing vagrancy, drugs and alcohol use, lack of a work ethic, youth insulting people (particularly elders), destruction

¹⁷⁸ Viven en un corral. La mamá trabaja en tabaco, el papá con las vacas, ellos llegan a la escuela sin bañarse antes, a veces han orinado en la noche y su ropa apesta de orina, el papá les habla a cualquier hora para que se vayan a la casa a comer, quizás una vez al día [comen], por que no tenemos alimentos por que alguien robó toda la comida de la escuela por que no tenemos un lugar seguro donde almacenarlo. Cuando viene la mama en toda su belleza y gordura, se sienta allí y lamenta sobre como están de malcriados sus chigüines y como no sabe que hacer. El boletín cuando lo mando a la casa lo traen cubierto en pupú, pupú de vaca. Está lleno de mierda! Los chavalos me dicen que su mamá les dice que ninguno de ellos aprendieron a leer y escribir y ella no se ha muerto de hambre todavía, y entonces ellos tampoco. La mayoría de las veces no copean las tareas en sus cuadernos, y cuando yo lo hago, rompen la página en mi cara, sonriendo.

¹⁷⁹ Yo tengo a una de segundo y sus padres no le ayudan nada en la casa. No lee nada todavía y sus hermanas mayores aún no le ayudan tampoco. Cuando yo le dije que viniera a sentarse a la par mia para trabajar porque tenía que salir bien el exámen que viene, me dijo, "No me importa. No importa que hago. Nadie me pega, nadie me regaña. Mi mamá dice que yo tengo que preocuparme, nadie más." Y yo le pregunté que pensaba su papá, porque él se habia involucrado más en la escuela, y ella me dijo que su papá no tiene ninguna razón de por qué involucrarse porque el no vive con ella. Vive con su mamá.

and theft of property, aggression and violence, and overall bad manners – “young people aren’t polite or respectful anymore,” a mother told me. “They’ve lost their manners because their parents don’t teach them anymore.”¹⁸⁰ People were particularly concerned with rising aggression and violence in Nicaraguan homes, on urban streets and in rural communities. One grandmother explained “today’s youth” to me as we sat on her porch during an interview.

And I also tell you that so many things that are seen today, so many problems now, that of the drugs, all of that, that the children (pause), you know that the situation is more difficult with one’s children. Because you have to be right behind that son or that daughter, right behind them because we don’t know what they’re involved in. Now that’s hard. Because you hear it said, you know, that kids take drugs [to school], that I don’t know what... It’s not like before. It’s changed. Look, now the young people don’t respect anything or anyone, they have no respect, they have no manners. It’s not important to them. They pass by there [in front of the house] and they say whatever they want to a person, they offend or do something. In the nighttime they throw rocks and things at the houses.¹⁸¹

The grandmother’s daughter had moved to Spain to be a nanny. With a steady, full-time job she sought to provide a better life for her son than she believed she could as an unemployed single mother in rural El Roble. She regularly sent money home for her son and her mother. By the time her son reached 12 years old, he had attended a half-dozen schools. At La Sigua – where he began his schooling years ago and where he had recently returned – he attended class irregularly. When he attended, he was disruptive throughout the school day. In November 2013, the *abuela* told her daughter to return to make decisions about her son’s future; he had dropped out of El Roble in October 2013 before finishing fourth grade.^{lxix}

People laid the majority of the blame for young people’s anti-values behaviors on family upbringing. Many also mentioned poverty. Though poverty was an anti-value itself, people were adamant that most everyone lived in poverty and that most adults still practiced Christian values and lived respectfully in community. Following this logic, parents whether

¹⁸⁰ Los jóvenes de hoy ya no son educados, no son respetuosos ya.

¹⁸¹ Y también le digo yo que tantas cosas que se miran ahora, tantos problemas ahora, eso, eso de la, las drogas, todo eso, que los niños..., fíjese que está más dura la situación con los hijos de uno. Porque usted tiene que andar detrás de aquel hijo, y aquella hija, detrás de ellos porque no sabemos en que ande involucrado. Ahorita está duro eso. Porque se oyó decir, pues, que hasta los chavalos se meten drogas hasta allá (en la escuela), que no sé qué y allí en los colegios, todo eso. No es como antes. Ha cambiado. Mire que ahora la juventud no respeta, no tienen respeto, no tienen educación. Ellos les vale, pasan hay y le dicen cualquier cosa a una persona lo ofenden o algo, pues, o les hacen algo, en las noches que pasan, aventando lajas y todo eso a las casas.

poor or not were ultimately responsible for their children's anti-values behaviors, a mother assured me.

If you let your children go around banding together in gangs¹⁸² they will learn by what they are doing, and those who stay with their family learn from them, too, because in the family, you need that. The family, how they raise their children is the most important.¹⁸³

She complained about parents who could no longer control their children. Fausto agreed. He cited a girl whose learning fell dramatically due to “problems between the couple. And who suffers are the children.”¹⁸⁴ He connected family disintegration with learning because “as you know, academic performance has a lot to do with lack of attendance and punctuality.” When Fausto spoke with the father of the girl, “he told me he couldn't control her! I told him, ‘C'mon man! She is your daughter. You have to control her! You have to educate her!’”¹⁸⁵

The girl was one of many children living in a disintegrated family, a relatively new phenomenon in rural communities and one many believed was rooted in anti-values imported from urban areas. “In the city it's like it is more disintegrated, the family. Just about everyone in the world works and children live alone or are taken care of by others, in day care or something,” Fausto explained. “Another difference is that the child in the city has more access to technology and if that is not used well it's prejudicial. It's prejudicial.”¹⁸⁶ A third difference Fausto raised was an alarming, generalized fear: “In the city, a risk children run is that they are going to be sold.”¹⁸⁷ Just as families taught values, disintegrated families either taught anti-values or allowed for anti-values to take root which contributed to the current state of affairs in which some felt there was “debauchery in everything.” Many parents vociferously condemned other families for not doing their part and allowing their

¹⁸² *andar engabillado* translates as bands or gangs, though more descriptively than in terms of organized crime.

¹⁸³ Libertinaje de todo, pues. No, que no hay, como le dijera yo, que, sera tambien por, por la crianza de los hijos, tambien, que asi según cria los hijos uno porque si a los hijos los deja andar uno engabillado, eso tienen que aprender en lo que andan haciendo, y los otros alla entonces ellos andan aprendiendo eso también. Porque en la familia tiene que a haber eso. La familia, pues, como va criando a sus hijos es lo más importante de todo.

¹⁸⁴ Parece que hay problemas entre la pareja. Entonces, quienes sufren son los hijos.

¹⁸⁵ Por ejemplo, usted sabe que el rendimiento académico tiene que ver mucho con, con la inasistencia y la, la puntualidad... ¡Me dijo que no la podía controlar! Y yo le dije, ‘¡Vamos, hombre! Es su hija. ¡Tienes que controlarla! ¡Tienes que educarla!’”

¹⁸⁶ En la ciudad como que es más desintegrada, la, la, la parte familiar. Casi todo el mundo trabaja y los niños viven solos o están cuidados por hay, o están en el, en la guardería. Otra diferencia (pausa) de que el niño en la ciudad como que tiene más acceso a las cuestiones tecnológicas. Y si no bien usado, es perjudicial, es perjudicial.

¹⁸⁷ Pero en la ciudad, el peligro que corren los niños es que vayan a vender.

children to embrace anti-values behaviors – and allow the explosion of anti-value behaviors in schools, communities and the entire region.

Teachers complained constantly about how first graders arrived to school with bad words and insults rolling off their tongues: “They’ve learned how to offend someone by first grade,” Ambrosia told me, laughing. “They don’t learn that from me or anyone here at school. They learn that at home.”¹⁸⁸ In addition to vulgar language, all teachers struggled against the often vulgar nicknames students called each other. All blamed parents and older siblings. Profe Murella echoed other teachers when she cited constant aggression among students in her classroom as coming from family models, making her constantly remind her students “that they respect each other...that they place their trust in the protection of God.”¹⁸⁹

Most rural families I knew, including all the teachers I worked with, lived in multi-generational homes where adults struggled together to make ends meet. One or more family member abused alcohol or drugs; domestic violence was a common topic of conversation. Suicide was the highest in the nation, particularly among adolescent boys. The normal nuclear family was comprised of “a single mother who is mom and dad”¹⁹⁰ (common expression) for her kids. Where multi-generational families and mutual support failed, people asserted, anti-values behaviors flourished and contributed to further family disintegration. Many described this increasingly common phenomena as “a downward cycle”¹⁹¹ that many families could not address.

In addition to families breaking down, many Nicaraguans believed anti-values were imported from outside Nicaragua through international agreements and the internet. For many adults, young minds were corrupted by FACEBOOK. “To them, the internet is Facebook,” a computer teacher said. “It’s all anyone knows. Kids don’t know the internet has much more. Teachers know even less.” Those who expressed the strongest dislike were those who had little to no access to new technologies – all participating teachers, most parents and most MINED Municipal officials. The internet brought pornography, homosexuality, lewd music videos and other anti-values many denigrated as not Nicaraguan.^{lxx} Some religious educators deemed the internet “the work of the devil”^{lxxi} and called on families to control

¹⁸⁸ Aprenden cosas en sus casas, las palabrotas y ya saben ellos cómo ofender a las personas antes del primer grado. No aprenden eso de mí ni de nadie aquí en esta escuela.

¹⁸⁹ Que respetarse entre ellos mismos... Que se encomienden al Señor.

¹⁹⁰ La mamá sola es mamá y papá

¹⁹¹ un ciclo para abajo

their children's access. They blamed families for young people accessing the internet easily on cell phones and in cyber cafes. The MINED suffered a similar lack of computer knowledge. In May 2013, it lost all enrollment data and required teachers to resubmit everything for the third time that year. Officials required teachers to submit all reports and copy all plans by hand because "they say hand-copied plans show we did it. It's the way they determine we don't use the same plan each year, they say."¹⁹²

The GRUN had a minor, auxiliary role in values education – if any role at all. Since many families were no longer able to teach children values, GRUN officials argued that the government had to reinforce values teaching in as many ways as it could. Since family disintegration contributed to the onslaught of anti-values, officials argued, the GRUN and MINED had a shared responsibility to fill the gap. After all, society reinforced values through societal norms, laws, regulations, religion, human rights and moral agreements that regulated people's behaviors (Valle, April 2013). The GRUN mandated teachers to reinforce values to "work developing students" (MINED INFORMA, June 24, 2013) and complement the family's primary responsibility of values teaching. Since teachers were with students more than 50% of their day, a Minister argued, they were second parents to their students. Teachers should model and reinforce positive values – and address anti-values behaviors – with children who did not have learning opportunities at home.

Many teachers took pride in this role and agreed wholeheartedly. Others rejected it and vehemently disagreed, reminding students and colleagues that teaching values was each family's job and they did not want to invade that responsibility. Still others complained that it was impossible with youth today and the restrictions imposed on them by international agreements that prohibited corporal punishment.

Embrace or rejection of the GRUN's role in values education depended on the specific values promoted and how the GRUN ordered they be enacted. Most Nicaraguans embraced GRUN efforts to highlight Christian and Nicaraguan values. Many supported GRUN efforts regarding individual and national sovereignty, restoration of basic rights, cleanliness and hygiene, and environmental protection. Differing points of view arose around gender equity and child rearing practices, among others. The GRUN passed radical laws

¹⁹² Dicen que los planes copiados a mano demuestran que lo hicimos nosotros. Es la forma que determinan que no usamos el mismo plan año tras año, dicen ellos.

protecting women from sexual harassment and abuse, and imposed 50-50 gender equity standards in all levels of government (from national posts to community Cabinets). Many women welcomed these attempts to change gender inequity and domestic violence. Many men criticized what they saw as men being charged as guilty before given the possibility to prove their innocence.

The GRUN ignored these differences and strengthened its commitment each year to provide values formation (education) where families could not. A large GRUN role was necessary to ensure each child's formation in the midst of instability and change. Teachers were to teach values by incentivizing parents to participate in GRUN projects and campaigns that were designed to change their beliefs and behaviors, which in the long-term would help them form their children better. GRUN officials communicated its values beliefs through its ongoing discourse, prescribed projects and campaign actions that it required teachers to organize and implement. The values emphasis was central to every teacher's socio-professional environment – and something teachers mediated each day in their practice.

GRUN Beliefs Regarding Values and Values Teaching-Learning Processes

In this section I look at GRUN beliefs about values and values education, values teaching-learning processes, and the expansion of values education from schools into communities. The “Live Pretty” Campaign demonstrated the finesse with which officials wove Sandinista values with commonly shared ones to make their program palpable and palatable for the majority of the population. I begin with a brief description of the GRUN's values approach through its school principals and training of all its teachers for the “Live Pretty” campaign.

Values in every school: Inundating teachers from top to bottom. Nucleus facilitators dictated a list of the month's values to teachers the last Friday of every month in TEPCE meetings. The list was followed by another list of values enactment activities for the month: one or more commemorations and community actions that teachers were to organize in their school or among a grouping of neighborhood schools. Like all waterfalls, these plan components were transmitted from a small group of national leaders in Managua to all 55,000 teachers within a period of hours. Values education relied almost exclusively on verbal orientations dictated to teachers who copied the information into their monthly

planning notebooks as per MINED planning requirements. Pedagogic advisors checked monthly notebooks during school visits to ensure teacher compliance.

Each school principal was responsible for ensuring that all teachers at their school implemented each verbal orientation. Each principal had to ensure that school property was adorned with updated Sandinista slogans and images, usually GRUN flyers of Daniel and First Lady Murillo. These had to be in visible places preferably in the school's entryway or along corridors that students and parents traversed regularly. The GRUN constantly updated flyers with a new slogan or campaign. They were multi-colored and usually had Daniel and Murillo smiling and waving during a commemoration. Three to five slogans framed their picture, above and below. For the year of "Live Pretty," high schools painted values sayings on their front entryway, like the one that appeared at the San Jose nucleus high school:

Government of National Reconciliation and Unity, The People, President! San José de la Montaña High School, "To continue working with more Strength, with more security that we are not ploughing the ocean... We are ploughing in fertile land (sic) We are ploughing in our Heart, in our Conscience..." Commander Daniel Ortega 2013 BLESSED, PROSPEROUS AND IN VICTORY MINED A Ministry in the Community.¹⁹³

Some principals included one or more Sandinista flags in common areas or classrooms (see photo 5). Every year, teachers placed the annual slogan in large colorful letters at the front of each classroom above the blackboard. For 2012, all classrooms were adorned with the slogan, "WITH EVERYONE AND FOR THE GOOD OF EVERYONE!" For 2013, the MINED ordered all teachers to replace the 2013 slogan, "'BLESSED, PROSPEROUS AND IN VICTORIES!" with her campaign name: "LIVE CLEAN, LIVE HEALTHY, LIVE PRETTY, LIVE WELL!" By the beginning of the school year, the campaign name in big block letters adorned the top of every blackboard or whiteboard at the front of every classroom.

The replacement of the annual slogan for the campaign name was one small indicator of the extent to which the government subsumed an enormous number of its efforts under the increasingly broad "Live Pretty" umbrella. It also signaled a notable increase in values messaging. The expanded values push began with "Live Pretty" trainings of national and

¹⁹³ Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, El Pueblo, Presidente! Inst. San José de la Montaña, "A continuar trabajando con más Fortaleza, con más seguridad de que no estamos arando en el mar... Estamos arando en tierra fértil (sic) Estamos arando en el Corazón, en la Conciencia..." Cmdte. Daniel Ortega 2013 BENDECIDOS, PROSPERADOS Y EN VICTORIA (sic), MINED Un Ministerio en la Comunidad

state officials and Sandinista Party Youth leaders who immediately replicated what they learned to tens of thousands of people across the country over several weeks. Murillo oversaw an intensive public relations campaign that included daily talks on government-controlled radio and television stations, constant press releases and motivational reports of success. Top government officials communicated non-stop orientations to those below about ongoing actions, usually community activities to be led by local public servants and leaders (Sandinista Party activists).

In addition to the steady barrage of verbal orientations and information from national, state and municipal officials, Murillo distributed the written “Live Pretty” Basic Guide to government and Sandinista Party organizations, agencies and offices. Some public servants, including teachers, paid for photocopies of the Guide during their initial campaign training. While government agencies and Sandinista organizations posted the full Basic Guide on their websites, teachers and local Sandinista leaders used it to promote the campaign verbally as campaign spokespeople with residents in thousands of communities and neighborhoods. Like many campaigns before “Live Pretty,” Murillo relied heavily on parallel waterfalls of learning, communication and supervision to create a nationally-led grassroots movement – or at least the appearance of one.

The campaign was unprecedented in its size and reach – and its emphasis on teachers and schools. Rather than the normal one-day training for a small group of teachers (or gifting one written document to a principal with instructions for teachers to read and study it with each other at their school site during an unstipulated time), Murillo created a full one-week training for all teachers nationally. She conjured visions of the National Literacy Crusade, a source of deep national pride, by referring to her campaign as the “Great National Campaign, ‘Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty.’” Like the Crusade, “Live Pretty” was founded on twice replicated trainings from which teacher participants began their work under one coordinated plan. Like the Crusade, the overarching objective was to *sensibilizar* teachers to embrace their new role to incentivize integral human growth and development in personal, family and community life in and out of school (MINED INFORMA, January 31, 2015).

Teachers “appropriate the fundamental elements of the [Campaign] Manual” during their trainings and, according to Murillo, gained all the tools needed to improve civic participation, *convivencia*, and respect of authorities in every community. They were

equipped to become the “guarantee that in the schools we are instilling values that require that we achieve that healthy, secure life, that clean life, that clean life, that living well” (MINED INFORMA, January 29, 2013). By undertaking their “great task” of “rescuing and strengthening values with our students” (MINED INFORMA, August 5, 2013), teachers “assume[d] the commitment to preserve and care for schools, institutions, public spaces and in this way also the multiplication of these habits in Nicaraguan society” (MINED INFORMA, February 7, 2013). These much-anticipated effects could only be reached through high-level saturation of teachers and the entire public.

Inundate to saturate and assimilate: The continually flowing waterfall. The first “Live Pretty” training included over one thousand educators who were mostly MINED officials in Managua. Once they completed their one-week training, they replicated it in every state with several thousand state and municipal MINED leaders. Within 24-48 hours after tier two educators finished their one-week training, they replicated the replicated training they had just received from their tier one supervisors with every teacher in their school nucleus. These were the classroom teachers they supervised. Replications were done back to back, with third tier teachers trained the week before classes began in order to begin coordinated on-the-ground implementation the first week of classes.

Every teacher received the campaign’s purpose and contents verbally and in the Basic Guide; the MINED charged teachers for the cost of their copy. Together, teachers planned the campaign’s first actions by copying from Murillo’s national plan: they would organize community-wide clean-up campaigns, ornament every school with flowers and trees (particularly national symbols), and do a community diagnostic study. Murillo ordered health clinics and all government offices to participate in the first two actions at the same time as well. She promised to continue communicating activities for each monthly TEPCE and during her daily press conferences. “We will convert all these actions in ‘*Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well...!*’ into a School, an Academy, a constant Campaign of Learning and Personal, Family and Community Practice, of Direct Democracy...expressed from Actions, Realizations and the Good Life...”¹⁹⁴ (Murillo, 2013, p. 21).

¹⁹⁴ Convirtamos todas estas **Acciones de Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien...!** (sic) en una Escuela, una Academia, una Campaña constante de Aprendizaje y Práctica Personal, Familiar y Comunitaria, de la Democracia Directa, que en viva voz se exprese desde las Acciones, las Realizaciones, y la Vida Buena y Mejor que vayamos alcanzando.

Murillo and GRUN officials reminded the public that each and every person was vital to their family's success, as well as that of their community and the nation. They regularly reminded people about the value and need to join together, not just in vague, feel-good terms but concrete projects from which they would see and feel results. Most health workers, teachers and parents embraced "Live Pretty" for its focus on cleanliness, hygiene and community campaigns that were vital to fight annual outbreaks of diseases like dengue and cholera. Only by all residents of a neighborhood or community joining together could they ensure that each home, yard, school and vacant lot was clear of stagnant water, trash and high grasses – mosquito breeding grounds¹⁹⁵ (they needed one quarter teaspoon of water or less) that had to be abolished to reduce the risk of dengue or cholera (and now Chikungunya and Zika). Community-wide clean-up campaigns were a proven method to prevent or mitigate deadly outbreaks from these mosquitos. They were exponentially more effective than house-to-house fumigations by the Ministry of Health. The latter killed adult mosquitos and left eggs intact^{lxxii} while the former killed the mosquito breeding habitat. The GRUN could not implement these efforts on its own (through the Health Ministry). This was why preventative health was a shared responsibility that required an organized and energized population to implement local preventative health actions together. This was the "coherence among who we are, what we think and what we do," a primary objective of the "Live Pretty" campaign.

By participating in GRUN programs and campaigns, officials repeatedly claimed, people put their Christian and patriotic beliefs into practice. Officials drew upon Nicaraguan identity and national pride to build a better future for all while defending their country from anti-values that were permeating Nicaraguan culture from the outside. Together – with the GRUN designing values-laden programs and campaigns and the entire population implementing them – the Nicaraguan people would eradicate anti-values and their behaviors from the nation. Together, they would re-install all that was good, that was Nicaraguan, for the common good.

Below, I describe several GRUN beliefs about values that impacted teachers in their daily work.

¹⁹⁵ *criaderos de zancudos*

Values help develop “coherence among who we are, what we think and what we do” (Murillo, 2013, p. 1). First Lady Murillo’s “Live Pretty” Campaign hammered home many of the beliefs the GRUN promoted in values education.

- 1 We invite ourselves, convene ourselves, to work together, to learn together,
- 2 Nicaraguans of all generations, to transform our Culture of Daily Life, placing
- 3 indispensable emphases on coherence among who we are, what we think and
- 4 what we do. (Murillo, 2013, p. 1).

On January 23, 2013, First Lady Murillo unveiled an ambitious national plan to implement “Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well!” Murillo decorated the first page of her 14-point plan on colorful “Government of National Reconciliation & Unity” and “Council of Communication and Citizenry” letterhead with five slogans that together represented some of the national coherence around identity, thoughts and action (line 3) she envisioned:

The People, President!
 2013: Blessed, Prosperous and Victorious!
 Christian, Socialist, Solidarity!
 Good Government!
 Citizen Power¹⁹⁶.

That same week, she distributed a half million copies of her 23-page “Basic Guide” to all government and Sandinista offices, agencies and organizations. She then launched three consecutive, one-week trainings with thousands of Sandinista Youth from cultural, sports, leadership, communicator and environmental organizations; 55,000 pre-school to 11th grade school teachers; and thousands of community Cabinet members. The “Live Pretty” Campaign soon became a prominent component of all government discourse and programs, nationally and in most communities. Murillo and top officials regularly reminded people that prosperity for every person, family and community – and of the entire nation – rested on developing coherence among every person’s identity, beliefs, and actions (lines 1-3). “Live Pretty” would help everyone achieve this objective “one Nicaraguan at a time.”

- 5 **Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well...!** Means for each of us,
- 6 to embark together on a series of easy, simple, daily Actions that will be
- 7 incorporating us into a Conscience of Shared and Complementary

¹⁹⁶ El Pueblo, Presidente! 2013: Bendecidos, Prosperados Y En Victorias! Cristiana, Socialista, Solidaria! Buen Gobierno! Poder Ciudadano – Consejo de Comunicación y Ciudadanía

8 Responsibility about the Country that we dream of, and the Country, Society,
 9 Community, Family and Human Being, that we want to recreate for Good. For
 10 Improvement. So Nicaragua continues being [an] Illuminated Example, of
 11 Idiosyncrasy, Identity, Intelligence, Sensitivity and Practices that from the
 12 heart represent [an] essential contribution to the Better World that among all
 13 of us we are obliged to make possible. (Murillo, 2013, p. 1-2)

Murillo designed the process of developing beliefs-actions coherence by participating in government programs and projects, what she called “easy, simple, daily Actions” that she and top officials would provide through verbal orientations on the radio and from each community and school leader. By engaging in daily actions together, people would develop a new “conscience” (line 7) to “embark together” to enact Ortega’s plan and create a new society based on Christian values, socialist ideals and solidarity actions (slogan). Following the government’s lead, Nicaraguans would embrace their Shared Responsibility (lines 7-8) to make Nicaragua blessed, prosperous and victorious (slogan). This was every Nicaraguan’s obligation, Murillo claimed, to contribute “to the Better World” (line 12) and the common good (line 9) based on their shared bonds and responsibilities as Nicaraguans, and as human beings living in families, communities and a shared society (lines 5–13). “Live Pretty” provided a clear path to recreate “the Country, Society, Community, Family and Human Being” (lines 8-9), what Murillo termed a shared dream.

13 **Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well...!** Is a formula and many
 14 formulas that point to simplicity, to moderation, to Balance, to rationality, to
 15 understanding citizen responsibility and the responsibility of Institutions, of the State,
 16 and the Complementary Cooperation of Churches, Private Business, Producers, of
 17 joining Forces, Strengths, Willingness and Commitments, to recreate Life in this 21st
 18 Century, of unprecedented challenges and essential learnings, not to survive, but
 19 rather to fill with meaning and significance all the contexts of Personal, Family,
 20 Community and Social Existence. (Murillo, 2013, p. 2-3)

For Murillo, the government’s role was to provide its people with “a formula” like the campaign and “many formulas” (lines 13-14) – its various one-size-fits-all programs and ongoing values activities, including historical commemorations of Sandinista heroes and events. Citizens had a responsibility to help the nation face unprecedented challenges (lines 15-18) but they were not alone. Through “Live Pretty,” Murillo institutionalized the government’s call for citizens to join with state institutions, private business to join with workers, Churches to join with everyone in transforming Nicaraguan society. Top officials

would provide people with “essential learnings” (line 18) and life’s most important values and their meaning (line 19) as well as actions people were to take together and even the procedures or how, when and with whom they should enact them. Government-approved actions were designed for the common good and a better world, Murillo assured people. She did not ask people to define their dreams or how to work towards the common good in line with local resources, needs, aspirations and histories. “Live Pretty,” Murillo insisted, defined one shared dream to “recreate Life” (line 17) across “all the contexts” of each person’s “existence” (line 19).

Murillo, at the very top of the “Live Pretty” waterfall,^{lxxiii} oriented loyal Sandinista Party members and government officials in daily press conferences regarding her values vision and how to enact it.

21 Because we have to be committed to the importance of our links, our affections, our
22 bonds, and the value each of us has in our determination to save the Planet and ensure
23 Harmonious, Just, Healthy, Dignified, Prosperous, Content, Secure, Sustainable
24 Societies. Because we should promote that people know how to find Happiness in
25 Values, in affective bonds, in Culture, Spirit, Science and shared Material Goods as
26 all Humanist, Idealist, Ethical and Evolutionary Philosophy mandates. As mandate,
27 moreover, our Beliefs and Desires, our Spirit of a Free, Valiant, Noble People filled
28 with Faith.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ **VIVIR LIMPIO, VIVIR SANO, VIVIR BONITO, VIVIR BIEN... !**

Nos invitamos, nos convocamos, a trabajar junt@s, a aprender junt@s, nicaragüenses de todas las generaciones, para transformar nuestra Cu-tura de la Vida Cotidiana, poniendo los énfasis indispensables en la coherencia entre lo que somos, lo que pensamos, y lo que hacemos.

Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien... ! Significa para cada un@ de nosotr@s, emprender junt@s una serie de Acciones sim-ples, sencillas, diarias, que vayan incorporándonos a una Conciencia de Responsabilidad Compartida y Complementaria sobre el País que soñamos, y el País, la Sociedad, la Comunidad, la Familia y el Ser Humano, que queremos re-crear para Bien. Para Mejor. Para que Nica-ragua continúe siendo Ejemplo Iluminado, de Idiosincrasia, Identidad, Inteligencia, Sensibilidad y Prácticas, que desde el corazón re-presenten contribución esencial al Mundo Mejor que entre tod@s estamos obligad@s a hacer posible.

Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien... ! Es una fórmula y muchas fórmulas que apuntan a la sencillez, a la moderación, al Equilibrio, a la racionalidad, a la comprensión del deber ciudadano y del deber de las Instituciones, del Estado, y la Cooperación Complementaria de las Iglesias, de la Empresa Privada, l@s Productor@s, de juntar Esfuerzos, Fuerzas, Voluntades y Compromisos, para recrear la Vida en este Siglo XXI, de desafíos inéditos y de aprendizajes imprescindibles, no para sobrevivir, sino para lograr llenar de sentido y significado todos los ámbitos de la Existencia Personal, Familiar, Comunitaria y Social.

Porque debemos estar tod@s compenetrad@s de la importancia de nuestros vínculos, de nuestros afectos, de nuestros lazos, y del valor que cada un@ de nosotr@s tiene en el empeño de salvar el Planeta y asegurar Sociedades Armoniosas, Justas, Saludables, Dignas, Prósperas, Contentas, Seguras, Sostenibles. Porque debemos pro-mover que las personas sepamos encontrar la Felicidad en los Valores, en los lazos afectivos, en la Cultura, el Espíritu, la Ciencia y los Bienes Materiales compartidos, como mandata toda Filosofía Humanista, Idealista, Ética y Evolucionaria. Como mandatan, además, nuestras Creencias y Querencias, nuestra Alma de Pueblo Libre, Valiente, Noble, lleno de Fé.

Murillo called on people to work from their commonly held “Christian and Family Values” (Murillo, 2013, p. 18), to put into practice *convivencia*, community identity, solidarity, respect, responsibility, and love. These were the values, she said, that gave meaning to the government’s policies and programs while at the same time they mandated that the government put their policies and programs into practice. Success required the participation of the entire population; like many values, participation was concurrently a value and a value in action. While the act of participating with others contributed to each participant’s personal transformation, the work they did together on GRUN projects contributed to the development of each family and community. Values helped people understand the world and their shared vision, while putting values into action contributed to the personal transformation and coherence that contributed to making that world and shared vision a reality. According to Murillo, Christian and family values guided actions like “conserving Water [and] Energy” (p. 19), “a Culture of Simple Living” (p. 19), “Permanent...Reflection” (p. 20) and protecting environmentally vulnerable areas.

These daily values and actions, Murillo told the nation, were necessary to overcome anti-values sweeping the country. In “Live Pretty” she cited anti-values of exclusion, prejudice, violence against women and Mother Earth, “vices derived from Excess” (p. 14), including excessive spending, over-consumption, ostentatious behavior. She also included drug use and sale “that leads us to lose our health, youthful energy, vitality and Full and Harmonious Life”¹⁹⁸ (p. 14). Together, Murillo envisioned, “we will combat with Solidarity Motivation” all anti-values.

Murillo touted teachers as strategic protagonists in the [values] education process and the fight against anti-values. As protagonists and public servants, teachers were to follow Murillo’s plan and orientations to the letter: to “promote the construction of a new society” (MINED INFORMA, February 7, 2013), “recreate” Nicaraguan society, communities, families, and individual human beings by guaranteeing that values “were installed” in every school. Teachers were responsible for educating families about their shared responsibility in “promoting values of solidarity, peace and love that are also promoted by the government”

¹⁹⁸ Combatamos con Motivación Solidaria, todos los vicios derivados del Exceso, y prevengamos el uso y comercio ilícito de drogas, que nos llevan a perder Salud, Energía de Juventud, Vitalidad y Vida Armoniosa y Plena. Los Excesos y Vicios nos roban el Presente y Futuro de miles de talentos nicaragienses, y nos toca unir esfuerzos para prevenir y atender esa peste de la llamada “Modernidad”.

(MINED INFORMA, June 24, 2013). “Schools touch on the lives of family and community which create an important network of families in every community working towards the same goals” (MINED INFORMA, February 27, 2013). Whether Sandinista or not, teachers had to commemorate Sandinista heroes, reflect on Sandinista values and invite residents in their school community to participate in and benefit from Sandinista-designed projects using Sandinista discourse. Murillo and MINED officials promised that following values orientations would help teachers become better educators and spearhead the quality education everyone sought. Every teacher’s role expanded from working in the classroom and with some parents to being government spokespeople and community organizers on projects that would benefit the community and nation.

Since values education involved values enactment, Murillo mandated teachers to lead campaign implementation efforts in coordination with local Sandinista Youth, community cabinet members, Town Hall staff and other local government agencies. She used the waterfall of ongoing communication – and the education of repetition and saturation – to ensure that the thousands of local actors she trained spoke using the same slogans and phrases, and took the same actions at the same time. This alignment created a powerful coordinated message in thousands of communities. Though school principals were responsible for incorporating all 55,000 teachers into this grassroots effort, where this was not possible they implemented orientations with community leaders. A Managua school principal characterized his first “Live Pretty” training as a space where educators “reflected about our commitment about how to put it into practice and the importance it has for the growth and integral development in personal, family and community life” (MINED INFORMA, January 2013). Classroom teachers who did not share the GRUN vision or values, could rely on their school principal to enact values education efforts until MINED supervision or ongoing teacher education changed their minds.

In the next section, I look at GRUN beliefs about teaching and learning values. Beliefs regarding values-academics relationships included general beliefs about teaching and learning, more specific beliefs regarding teaching and learning values, as well as beliefs regarding if and how values fit with academics. These beliefs influenced how teachers understood the GRUN’s dramatic shift of values education from strictly the family realm to

include values in schooling, as well as how they decided if, which parts, when, where, and how to implement it.

Beliefs about teaching and learning in general, and values in particular. The GRUN relied heavily on the waterfall of learning in its values education, a method that communicated institutional beliefs about teaching and learning that I discussed in chapter 5. In the case of values education, Murillo was the expert who transmitted her values knowledge to a small group of loyal educators in a brief training. In receiving Murillo's knowledge, that small group became expert enough to replicate Murillo's training with other state and municipal leaders who in turn became experts to train 55,000 teachers who became values experts in their classrooms and communities upon receiving a twice replicated replication of Murillo's training.

Murillo and top officials designed the values education content and proceduralized actions to implement, such as the entire "Live Pretty" campaign. This reinforced a common belief among teachers that top GRUN officials were ultimately responsible. "For me, right," Liria explained to me, "what is in everything in education, as the responsible entity and for the act of education so this all functions, is the government."¹⁹⁹ She likened the GRUN to being "like the sun"²⁰⁰ in our planetary system.

Practically it's like that because everything comes from here (points to circle labeled government on her education system map), because it is the one in charge of guaranteeing education to the children of the country, and it is the one that..., the one that gives orders, how it is going to function, what is known as education, even though there is a Minister of Education but she acts in accordance with the orientations the government gives.²⁰¹

All teachers agreed that the MINED was their "rector," a characterization Fausto explained succinctly: "It is what organizes us, controls us, executes us. It is the rector. So, the rector is the [Municipal MINED] Delegate...the Municipal MINED for us...And internally, I am the

¹⁹⁹ Para mí, verdad, lo que está en todo, en la educación, como responsable y como el acto de la educación para que esto funcione, está el gobierno.

²⁰⁰ Es como el sol

²⁰¹ Prácticamente así porque mire, todo viene desde aquí. Porque el es encargado de garantizar la educación a los niños, el país, y él es que..., el que da las ordenes, cómo es que se va a funcionar todo lo que es la educación. Aunque hay una Ministra de Educación, pero ella va de acuerdo a las orientaciones que también él [gobierno] da.

rector here [in El Roble].”²⁰² Teachers received knowledge verbally and through written materials from their rector via the waterfall. With a focus on transmission and reception, verbal information relied on notes and memory while written materials were regularly passed along without having been read. The MINED measured information transmission and reception – mostly by participation numbers and group production of a written product and/or evaluation –to determine training success.

Each person who received information in the waterfall replications was able to both immediately transmit it to others and use it in practice – even when neither of these uses of content were part of a replication. Those at the top and middle levels of the waterfall transmitted information to like-minded individuals of about the same age, experience and political beliefs. Those at the bottom – all classroom teachers – were required to transmit the information and put it into practice immediately with a large, diverse cross-section of the population: children, youth and adults of all ages with varying levels of schooling and literacy skills, and a wide assortment of political beliefs regarding Daniel Ortega as a person, his “Good Government” (slogan) and his Sandinista Party.

The GRUN scheduled no time for tier one and two teacher trainers to prepare their replications. Instead, the expert gave them a brief (often 1-page) guide and a written document to disseminate to participants – or read aloud to them. The written document ensured that everyone received the same information and knowledge from the very top to the very bottom of the waterfall. The vast majority of people trained – the 55,000 classroom teachers – received twice replicated messages and information about campaign content, expectations, implementation procedures, and planned supervision. Top officials believed they avoided distortions or confusions that could be transmitted by teacher trainers through the transmission and dissemination of written information exactly as top officials prepared it – and teacher trainers following the same 1-page replication guide. Still, learners received information by making sense of it with what they already knew – using their beliefs and knowledge to filter the transmitted words. Though the written text was transmitted faithfully with each replication until it reached the bottom of the waterfall, it became shorter and more partial with each replicated step as it transmitted gaps in teacher trainer knowledge and skills.

²⁰² Es el que nos, o sea, el que nos organiza, que nos controla, que nos...nos ejecuta. Es el rector. Entonces, la parte rectora aquí es la Delegada. Es MINED municipal para nosotros...Y ya yo, en lo interno, soy el rector aquí.

The GRUN focused on transmitting information regarding one-size-fits-all actions within its myriad programs and campaigns that contained the same content, discourse, expectations and activities for all Nicaraguans. Trainings focused on timing, participation, motivation messages and supervision requirements. This method communicated official beliefs that teaching and learning was a uniform process that could be mandated and supervised within a top-down system of information transmission, reception and immediate replication with no distinction for developmental differences, learning needs or any diversity among teachers and learners. If teachers had to produce a plan during PD as proof of learning, each individual plan was to be similar to all the others. If teachers produced a report, each report was similar in format, content and deadline. Rather than reflect diversity, each plan and report reflected uniformity and compliance to MINED orders.

MINED officials and teacher trainers dismissed potentially negative effects of limited resources for teaching and learning that for a motivated teacher were easily overcome – and her full responsibility.

Look, I say that the gap mostly comes from, the fundamental thing that sometimes is lacking is willingness, first. The second would be that sometimes the teacher wants to transmit [what s/he learned] with the same extension with which we received it. Sometimes we receive those trainings observing sophisticated models, right? But what is missing sometimes is how to use materials from our surroundings to substitute for the sophisticated [ones]. That is one of the hits teachers take (setbacks).²⁰³

An NGO had just given a training using dice, and Fausto used an example from that training.

For example, if we are going to use dice, we want to see the dice made well. We are incapable sometimes of building them. We can build them out of cardboard. Or with leftover pieces of wood. We can't let [lack of resources] limit us... So, how do we use material from our surroundings to substitute. And that is what we want, to innovate. We want teacher innovators, not multipliers and nothing more... In other words, it's not that they taught me to make this circle like this and that's the way I will teach it. Instead, I will seek out, innovate about what other way I can take a small reed or creeper branch from my environment if I don't have a pencil, right?²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Mire, yo digo más que todo la brecha viene, lo fundamental que a veces es falta de voluntad, primero. Lo segundo sería de que a veces el maestro quiere como transmitir aquello con la, con la misma, con la misma diría extensión que a nosotros se nos imparte. A veces nosotros recibimos esas capacitaciones observando algunos modelos sofisticados, verdad? Pero lo que hace falta a veces es como usar el material del medio para sustituir eso sofisticado. Entonces, allí es la, allí es uno de los pegones del maestro.

²⁰⁴ Por ejemplo, si vamos a usar dados, queremos ver los dados bien, bien contruidos. Somos incapaces a veces de construir. Podemos construirlos de cartón. O con trozos de madera que a veces son, son rastrojos. Pero tampoco eso no nos puede limitar... Entonces, como, como usar material del medio para sustituir. Y que eso es

Material and even knowledge limitations should not affect learning or teaching, according to MINED leaders and school principals. The fact that each PD replication relied on increasingly limited resources – less materials, diminishing knowledge and experience among the training teams, in scarcer physical environments – fell on those at the bottom, the implementers (i.e., classroom teachers), to resolve. This allowed officials at the upper levels of the waterfall (i.e., national designers, first and second tier teacher educators) to affirm that they did their job, transmitting information as faithfully as possible and exactly as they had received it. They ignored any effects limited resources had on those below them. It was now the teachers' responsibility to successfully implement policies, programs and campaigns with the entire Nicaraguan population. For motivated teachers with values, anything was possible. The MINED disseminated endless stories of motivated teachers who assured the public that they successfully implemented what was required.

According to widely-held and constantly voiced institutional beliefs about motivation and learning, motivated teachers were those who practiced values and could thus put the campaign into practice without any questions or challenges. Motivated teachers learned PD information and followed orientations with enthusiasm, the MINED reported.

More privately during PD, the waterfall method reinforced messages about full compliance based on what could be supervised and reported on to superiors – in the exact same way with the same evaluation criteria and measures in every school around the country. Compliance in PD was measured by logistical dichotomies like teacher attendance/absence to a workshop. Quality of participation was not measured or (self-)reported. Compliance focused on teacher trainers transmitting information in the time allotted; if MINED officials did their job, all teachers received the same information. Those who wanted to learn would learn, and those who wanted to put information into practice could do that, too. Limited access to resources along with differing needs, experiences, and knowledge was never addressed or taken into account.

Compliance encouraged uniform plans and positive group evaluations. Uniformity helped superiors aggregate reports into one regional report for their superiors, so information

lo que queremos, innovar. Queremos maestros innovadores, no multiplicadores, nada más... O sea, no es de que me enseñaron a hacer este círculo así y así les voy a enseñar yo. Sino buscar, innovar de que otra forma yo lo puedo tomar un bejuquito en el medio si no tengo lapicero, ¿verdad?

could easily be transmitted back up to the top. Uniformity also facilitated the MINED and GRUN penchant for celebrating success. Officials demanded teacher flexibility in compliance with constant policy and program changes: teachers routinely re-did plans and reports when necessary. They expressed reservations and outright disagreement verbally in private socio-professional spaces that no one documented in written evaluations. In this environment of uniformity and compliance, teachers had to bridge what they knew and had always done (from the time they were students in the school system through teacher preparation and classroom practice) with the government's constant policy and program changes that were the rule rather than the exception. The government governed by contrarianism and "a policy of ruptures" (Vijil, 2010) – and education was not spared this fundamental governance dynamic.

The above combinations of beliefs about teaching and learning embedded in the waterfall flowed freely into the elementary classroom. Elementary teachers were the experts who transmitted information to students. Teachers in PD and students received information from written materials that was dictated to them or that they copied. Upon receiving information from the experts, each was responsible for learning the information and putting it into practice. In both PD and elementary classrooms, the learners (teachers in PD, children in elementary school) "appropriated" or "assimilated" information according to their personal motivation and attitude which only they controlled. Experts "facilitated," "transmitted" or "gave" information or lessons to learners. Learners copied the information provided and then used it in whatever way the teacher required. Academic information was memorized and re-presented on written tests; values information was enacted with others by following a pre-defined procedure coordinated by government officials. Supervision in PD and the elementary classrooms involved punitive threats or consequences that were geared to carry out the learning process to ensure learning. Since teachers became teacher trainers after one workshop, teacher learners did the same, as did student learners in the classroom. Once an expert "facilitated" or "gave" information to participants, she completed her role and responsibility. A teacher or student learner studied the information and either put it into practice (values) or re-presented it (academic content). This completed their roles and responsibilities, and demonstrated their motivation and learning.

Values versus academics or values and academics. Many educators argued that values gave meaning to the academics, while others went further: academics were decontextualized scientific content, even gibberish, without values. A singular focus on academics made students robots and non-thinkers. All the teachers I knew separated academic content from values in multiple ways. Teachers echoed a theme I read and heard about often in the media: academic content was “theoretical” and “scientific”; it was not practical like values. On its own and in one individual person it amounted to little. In a schooling context of rote memorization, academic content turned students into unthinking, uncaring human beings. Someone who was “smart” in academic knowledge was often viewed as not intelligent in practical knowledge; stereotypes characterized “intellectuals” as arrogant or feeling like they were better than others who they looked down upon for having less academic knowledge. This was anti-values behavior – and something to not permit in the classroom, family or community.

Scientific or “theoretical” knowledge became “important” and had “relevance” when a student “appropriated” the knowledge by putting it into practice. Putting it into practice was when values entered the equation. Teachers and the MINED talked about putting scientific knowledge into practice as being equivalent to using it towards the common good, often in community development projects or campaigns – but specific examples of this using the academic curriculum were nonexistent. The MINED’s “integral” education that embedded values into academic content to make it relevant was similar to all GRUN campaigns: the idea was there for all to imagine but in practice there were few to no concrete examples.

Profe Fausto explained that an exclusive focus on academic content would mean an exclusive focus on “improving how I teach content and how a student learns that content.” This, he said, was “totally unacceptable.” Instead, the focus needed to be on an “integral” education and development of the person “as much cognitive as how the teaching that I am giving the student serves their life and for their entire lives.”²⁰⁵ The focus had to be on integral development of each human being in community, not solely individually or academically. This integrality with values embedded in schooling and values enveloping all

²⁰⁵ Una educación integral... Como yo voy integrando todo lo, todo lo que tiene que ver con la parte que tiene que ver con la parte del desarrollo de la persona, tanto su parte cognitiva, también su forma de cómo, esa enseñanza que estoy dando al alumno, le sirva a la vida y de por vida. De que, es que, que el alumno sea capaz de lo que aprende, debe poder ponerlo en práctica. Y de algo le debe servir.

academic content made the scientific information useful in life and for life, and helped a student use it not just memorize it. It helped a student understand the importance of the scientific content and helped him or her become capable of putting what s/he learned into practice – for her family and community.

The opposite was what happened in many classrooms and schools, Fausto opined. “If I teach, to give an example, so the child has that knowledge but does not appropriate it, I am not building in him a formation that is useful. That is more a superficial education. So what do we do? Sometimes we just teach so the child passes, passes his exams and all that.” Fausto insisted that the education system had a long way to go to integrate values into the content – and he placed responsibility on teachers individually as well as the MINED.

We squeeze each child into a box and what does the child produce? Are we truly perceiving that student as something useful in that kind of education? In addition to that I have to be forming my students in values so he can make, develop and participate in the society in which he is immersed. If that child cannot develop and contribute to a society, I have not taught him anything and he has learned nothing.²⁰⁶

For Fausto, the cross-curricular pillars introduced this “very principal, very essential part” of education and they had to “bathe and be with the child into the future and in all his actions.”²⁰⁷

A focus only on how a teacher taught academic content would focus only on how students learned that same content. Fausto admitted that there was a serious flaw in MINED assessments because they did focus almost exclusively on academic content. This focus, he explained, made many teachers focus only on the academics and not take responsibility for values formation. Families were the principal venue for values formation, but teachers had to

²⁰⁶ Si yo solo enseño, por decir algo, para que el niño tenga ese conocimiento pero no se apropia de él, yo no estoy construyendo en él una formación de utilidad. Tiene que ser una educación somera. Entonces, ¿qué es lo que hacemos? De que a veces solo enseñamos para que el niño apruebe. Que pasa los exámenes y todo eso. Entonces, eso es lo que yo digo, el niño lo llevamos solamente y lo encajonamos. Y lo usamos como los cajeros, meterle tarjeta, meterle tarjeta, a meterle tarjeta... ¿pero qué produce el niño? ¿Qué produce el niño de todo eso que yo le estoy dando? ¿Será capaz de, de, de pegar un botón? ¿Sera capaz en de construir su propio modelo de educación? ¿Estará percibiendo verdaderamente el alumno esa educación como algo útil para su vida? Entonces, allí es donde yo miro la calidad de la educación. Y además de eso que yo le voy a ir formándole en los valores. Para que él pueda hacer, desarrollar y desenvolver en una sociedad en donde él está inmerso. Si yo no soy capaz de que el niño se pueda desenvolver en una sociedad, no he enseñado nada ni él ha aprendido nada.

²⁰⁷ Esta una parte bien principal, bien esencial, que es la competencia de grado y la competencia de ejes transversal. Que eso baña, eso va, conlleva al alumno hacia el futuro y en todas sus acciones.

combine values with the academic content, as well as student behavior as based on values rather than the more and more common anti-values behaviors in the classroom.

The separation of academics from values was even starker in teacher's language. Academic learning was "learning" and "the educational component" while values was "formative" and more in line with human development in practice through *convivencia* and the relationships one had in community. Fausto divided planning as "the educational part" which was copying academic content, and "the formative part" or values. He looked down upon the teacher who was more interested in a student learning 4 times 4 over a student learning to salute neighbors and strangers as they crossed path within the community or outside of it, and demonstrate other respectful and responsible behaviors to others.

Fausto placed blame in part on the MINED and GRUN because their focus was on academic content in the assessment system. What the MINED demanded teachers assess and report on had not changed with the curricular transformation in values. The two remained separate. "Because in the end," he said, "what is going to be reflected in the report card? It is a quantitative grade, not the child's formation." When I asked him where that pressure came from to focus on the quantitative academic grade, he immediately highlighted the GRUN and MINED. "That comes from the structural model, the head office, the central office, and that's how it's worked."²⁰⁸

Fausto also talked about how the two areas had to "intersect or meet." He returned back to the responsibility in each individual teacher. The intersection of values and academics happened in the classroom based on each teacher's planning, instruction and assessment. This depended on the compliance of each teacher, Fausto said. "The teacher knows that what [the MINED] is going to request is the results of grades. They don't ask about discipline." But even though the MINED placed little emphasis on student behavior and values in the classroom in their learning assessment, Fausto was one of the few teachers who explicitly talked about how "one affects the other." He cited one of his colleagues, Profe Regalia. "The lack of discipline in her classroom makes student performance low. So you can't have the opposite: performance and then discipline. We have to form people

²⁰⁸ Eso viene del modelo ya estructural, de la casa matriz, de la sede central. Y así ha trabajado.

academically but also form them as people. Each affects the other. The two are inseparable even though some try to separate them.”²⁰⁹

Fausto, Adriana and other publicly-identified Sandinista educators often said academic or scientific knowledge was only useful and relevant when placed within this more collective context, when an individual who was part of a larger group could make scientific knowledge work for the greater good, for the family, community and nation. All teachers felt strongly that families were the main formers of young people – and that schools could only do so much. They underscored how values were part of student classroom behaviors – as interactions among students as well as between teachers and students. They talked about how teachers had to respect students more just as students had to respect teachers more, and each other.

It was an uphill battle that remained more in discourse than classroom practice. Teacher preparation focused exclusively on academics; it basically provided preparing teachers with a second academic opportunity to learn high school curricular knowledge to then teach elementary content better. A Normal School director explained that “in the [Normal] schools we should form a kind of teacher that goes beyond the graduated teacher, but rather a teacher that forms not just academically but also has a commitment to improve in values formation from the community” (MINED INFORMA, March 26, 2014). Here the MINED official confirmed that her program focused on academics. She agreed that the MINED wanted a more integral “graduated teacher” and that the MINED was not preparing teachers in this more integral way, still. According to her logic, then, it was the teacher’s responsibility to commit to putting values in practice in the community where she or he worked and lived.

Many shared this sentiment. Emiliano Ramírez, a physics and math teacher, wrote a critical opinion piece in which he called upon teachers to do the work they committed to do.

Teachers have assumed the responsibility, the human commitment to build, to transform children and youth into men and women as individuals of character, with a spirit of decision, with feelings of satisfaction in responsibility, with the integrity and

²⁰⁹ La indisciplina allí lo hace al rendimiento abajo. Entonces, no puede venir al contrario, rendimiento y después disciplina. Entonces, en esto está la calidad de la educación. Formar a personas académicamente pero también formarlos como, como tal. A la una a la otra le afecta. Son inseparables aunque algunos intentan separarlos.

fortitude to address vital life problems...The teaching and cultivation of these virtues is more important and has more positive effects on the formation of children and youth than many content areas that fill school programs.²¹⁰ (El Nuevo Diario, May 10, 2012)

Dr. Huete Pérez, a molecular biologist, called for a “structural transformation” of the education system which he intermittently characterized as creating “a sensation of generalized alarm,” as being “embarrassing” and that was “in all lights useless” (La Prensa, May 3, 2012). The transformation he envisioned “cannot be defined by its impact on economic growth but rather in function of human, cultural and social development.”²¹¹

Pérez (2012) criticized international organizations’ “agenda” for “a truly scientific education...emphasizing the formative function of teaching sciences.” This focus ignored “the importance of values in the formation of people socially, solidarity and ethically committed. We know that the loss of values brings with it a leadership crisis of mediocrity in institutions.”²¹² After citing that Nicaragua had 20 scientists for every one million inhabitants, he asserted that if this continued the country was condemned to failure. For Pérez, saving the education system was a shared responsibility and not one that fell only to the GRUN and “external charity” that kept it afloat. “It is a problem of the entire society, and

²¹⁰ Cuando digo responsabilidad humana, me refiero a todo el aparato educativo, principalmente a los maestros, a los que han asumido el deber, el compromiso humano de construir, de transformar a niños y jóvenes en hombres y mujeres como individuos con carácter, con espíritu de decisión, con sentimiento de la satisfacción en la responsabilidad, con entereza para abordar problemas vitales de la vida; al maestro que asume con amor inculcar en los estudiantes los valores de discreción, lealtad y espíritu de sacrificio para con él, su familia, su patria y su pueblo; convencidos que estas virtudes son indispensables para formar grandes hombres para grandes pueblos. La enseñanza y cultivo de tales virtudes tiene más importancia y efectos positivos en la formación de los niños y la juventud, que muchas de las asignaturas que llenan los programas escolares.

²¹¹ Hay una sensación de alarma generalizada por la penosa situación del sistema educativo nicaragüense. Solo el diez por ciento de la fuerza laboral ha aprobado la secundaria... Pero no se trata de restaurar cosméticamente el modelo que es a todas luces inútil. Se requiere más bien una transformación estructural del sistema... La calidad del sistema educativo no puede definirse según su impacto en el crecimiento económico, sino en función del desarrollo humano, cultural y social.

²¹² La preocupación por una educación verdaderamente científica está en la agenda de todos los organismos internacionales hoy día, enfatizando la función formadora de la enseñanza de las ciencias. Tampoco se puede ignorar la importancia de los valores en la formación de personas comprometidas socialmente, solidarias y éticas. Ya sabemos que la pérdida de valores conlleva a la crisis dirigencial y a la mediocridad de las instituciones.

for this reason there is no room for apathy.” Working to solve the education crisis at all levels would be “the most noble and majestic collective task.”²¹³

The MINED incorporated values into academics by introducing cross-curricular pillars and values learning in plans and reports. Before “Live Pretty,” the MINED had combined values with academics in the Annual Organizational Plan (POA) it required of each school principal. Liria had presented the same POA each year, copying from the previous year’s POA with only small changes each time. In 2013, she was going to teach 2nd – 6th grades rather than 1st – 4th grades, for example. Liria’s 2013 POA had three overall objectives, the first of which related to values: “to contribute to the development of civic, social, moral and effective values.” This was followed by two academic objectives, “to contribute to the development of abilities and capacities in oral and written communication,” and “to contribute to the development of logical, creative, critical and scientific thinking.” The POA’s mission had combined values with academic content; values were needed to achieve the overarching mission:

To promote and guarantee an integral and quality education in which the students appropriate scientific content, critical and creative thinking, moral, spiritual and patriotic values with the participation of different social actors as a shared task that promotes solidarity to form capable and useful people in society.²¹⁴

Liria’s “Live Pretty” plan focused only on values; it made no reference to academic teaching or learning.

The POA vision fell in line with the “Live Pretty” values focus.

That students apply, their knowledge taking them into practice and that they assume responsibilities and goals that work towards transforming and achieving the progress and development of our country, becoming involved in an active way as a responsibility for our homeland.²¹⁵

²¹³ Otro acierto es la búsqueda de consensos pues la falta de un sistema educativo de calidad no es un asunto exclusivo del Gobierno, ni se le puede seguir encargando a la caridad extranjera. Se trata de un problema de toda la sociedad y, por ello, no puede haber lugar para la apatía.

²¹⁴ Promover y garantizar la educación integral y de calidad donde los estudiantes se apropien de conocimientos científicos, pensamiento crítico y creativo, valores morales, espirituales y patrióticos con la participación de los diferentes actores sociales como una tarea compartida donde se promueva la solidaridad para formar personas capaces y útiles a la sociedad.

²¹⁵ Que los estudiantes apliquen, sus conocimientos llevándolos a la práctica y que asuman responsabilidades y metas encaminadas a transformar y lograr el progreso y desarrollo de nuestro país, involucrándose de manera activa como un deber para con nuestra patria.

Murillo had made similar references in her “Live Pretty” basic guide. The campaign was “a formula” that worked toward:

...the comprehension of the responsibility of the citizenry and the responsibility of State, Institutions, and the Complementary Cooperation of the Churches, Private Business, Producers, to join Efforts, Forces, Willingness and Commitments, to recreate Life in this XXI Century... to fill sense and meaning in all personal, family, community and social existence.²¹⁶ (Murillo, 2013, p. 3)

The POA vision was most likely a paragraph Liria had copied from a GRUN or MINED document or speech – like the introductory paragraphs I saw teachers write so fluidly for each report they wrote during monthly TEPCEs that highlighted GRUN slogans and discourse.

With the “Live Pretty” campaign, the MINED leaned towards prioritizing values enactment over academics. Values MINED officials communicated in each TEPCE were verbal orientations about that month’s school events, celebrations, commemorations, school programs and school-community activities that teachers were to include in their monthly curricular program and juggle with implementing their daily academic lesson plans. The fact that academic knowledge had only to be “facilitated” or “given” (two most popular verbs used for teaching) to students for students to copy and study at home to learn outside the classroom contributed to MINED officials demands to implement values in action that regularly took teachers out of the classroom and cut instructional time considerably.

Contested Beliefs Regarding the GRUN’s Values Education

People held different beliefs about the GRUN’s values education efforts and “Live Pretty” in particular. Opposition leaders voiced critiques, often using political perspectives. Others voiced differences about certain components that comprised values education, how the GRUN implemented it through the waterfall and on the ground, and the GRUN’s evaluation methods. Below I highlight critiques I heard among teachers, including those that affected if, how, when and with whom they implemented values education actions.

²¹⁶ Es una fórmula y muchas fórmulas que apuntan a la sencillez, a la moderación, al Equilibrio, a la racionalidad, a la comprensión del deber ciudadano y del deber de las Instituciones, del Estado, y la Cooperación Complementaria de las Iglesias, de la Empresa Privada, l@s Productor@s, de juntar Esfuerzos, Fuerzas, Voluntades y Compromisos, para recrear la Vida en este Siglo XXI, de desafíos inéditos y de aprendizajes imprescindibles, no para sobrevivir, sino para lograr llenar de sentido y significado todos los ámbitos de la Existencia Personal, Familiar, Comunitaria y Social.

Organized political opposition to Ortega and his Sandinista Party. Opposition figures expressed alarm about different aspects of GRUN values. Most condemned what they perceived as blatant politicization. Some condemned the GRUN's values actions as an electoral strategy to gain votes while others raised alarms about Murillo's successful legalization of community Cabinets – widely seen as Sandinista Party vehicles – as part of “Live Pretty” legislation (Equipo Envío, March 2013). Many also denounced what they saw as a Sandinista attempt to co-opt Nicaraguan values as Sandinista ones to provide moral backing to certain political and socio-economic ideologies and programs (i.e., 21st century socialism) and moral condemnation of others (i.e., capitalism, neo-liberalism, imperialism). Some in the opposition berated Murillo and the GRUN for “Live Pretty's” explicit objective to achieve coherence in how the Nicaraguan population thought, believed and acted – as one Sandinista nation. This represented an unprecedented and alarming foray by the government into people's private lives. I look at these criticisms briefly below.

Ortega's values efforts were a disguise for a Sandinista politicization strategy.

When the GRUN launched “Live Pretty,” Ortega and his Sandinista Party had consolidated power in the four branches of government nationally and 87% of Municipal Town Halls with Sandinista mayors and city council members^{lxxiv} (Berntzen, 2012; Puig, 2013). To many, “Live Pretty” was designed to strengthen and consolidate the top heavy Sandinista movement at the grassroots by enforcing local Sandinista governance and coherence of Sandinista values and actions in every rural community and urban neighborhood. By consolidating national, municipal and local governance, the GRUN (and Sandinista Party) could power a multi-level movement that involved their greatest resource – the Nicaraguan citizenry^{lxxv}. The Jesuit editorial team characterized the GRUN's values efforts as a risk.

A risk for respect of individual rights, as a mechanism of social control, and as one more expression of the State-government political party [alignment], because all state institutions will work “articulatedly” with the Cabinets. “They will be like the State working at the smallest level”: as the MRS deputy Edipcio Dubon characterized them.²¹⁷ (Equipo Envío, March 2013)

²¹⁷ Esa inserción, leída en el contexto en el que surge, acompañada de la estrategia mayor del “vivir bonito”, promoviendo “valores cristianos, ideales socialistas y prácticas solidarias” ha sido percibida por diversas voces sociales, políticas y religiosas como una injerencia preocupante en la vida privada de las familias, como un riesgo para el respeto a los derechos individuales, como un mecanismo de control social, y como una más de las

Some opposition politicians called for active struggle against “Live Pretty” particularly and its perceived closing of individual rights and expressions of differences. “The only way to contain this judicial aberration that violates the Constitution of the Republic is closing the doors on the homes of the activists of the party of Nicaragua’s new millionaires,”²¹⁸ a Liberal Party congressperson declared (Equipo Envio, March 2013). Across different political parties and ideological spectrums, there was an outcry against “Live Pretty” and the recently legalized frameworks of the Cabinets, with whom Murillo mandated teachers work to coordinate all actions in and outside the school in regards to values. Leaders of the Renovated Sandinista Movement proposed that people mobilize.

To struggle against the harassment that Orteguismo is carrying out, in all communities and neighborhoods against every person that manifests ideas independently and does not subordinate themselves to their demands. We do not recognize any validity to the so-called Cabinets of the Family and we call on the population to not recognize any authority from them.²¹⁹ (Equipo Envio, March 2013). The President of the Nicaraguan Center on Human Rights also called for civil disobedience against the government. “There is only civil disobedience when there is a law to disobey. We should not wait for a response from the tribunals. The population has the responses, not participating in anything these Cabinets convoke”²²⁰ (Equipo Envio, March 2013).

Ortega’s values education efforts trampled people’s individual and private rights. Many expressed concerns echoed in opposition media that “Live Pretty” was one of the most powerful forays by the Sandinistas into people’s private lives. Opposition Congressional leaders expressed their misgivings more vocally than the teachers ever could. “It gives the opportunity for organizations attuned to the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to meddle in the private life of families,” one Congressperson said. Another went further:

expresiones del Estado-partido de gobierno, ya que todas las instituciones estatales trabajarán “articuladamente” con los Gabinetes. “Serán como el Estado trabajando al nivel más chiquito”: así los define la diputada del MRS Edipcia Dubón.

²¹⁸ “La única manera de contener esta aberración jurídica que viola la Constitución de la Republica, es cerrándole las puertas de las casas a los activistas del partido de los nuevos millonarios de Nicaragua”.

²¹⁹ “Movilizarnos para luchar contra el hostigamiento que realiza el orteguismo, en todas las comunidades y barrios contra toda persona que se manifiesta de manera independiente y no se subordina a sus exigencias. No reconocemos ninguna validez a los llamados Gabinetes de Familia y llamamos a la población a no reconocerle ninguna autoridad a los mismos”.

²²⁰ “Sólo hay desobediencia civil cuando hay una ley que desobedecer. No debemos esperar respuesta de los tribunales. Las respuestas las tiene la población no participando en nada que convoquen estos Gabinetes”.

“There should be a national alert, because the disappearance of private life is being regulated” (Escudos, March 2013).

Murillo did little to allay these fears. She spoke of developing a cadre of educators who would carry the “Live Pretty” message into *cada rincón* or “every corner” of the country. She reminded people that the GRUN had 55,000 teachers at her disposal who worked in almost every community and to whom she provided orientations. It also had community Cabinet members in every community and Sandinista Youth members from five groups – sports, environmental protection, radio and communication, leadership, and arts/culture – what many termed the GRUN’s “currents of transmission” (Envio) because their members made critical decisions at the local level; they approved or denied community member solicitations for scholarships, government-related jobs, participation in technical-vocational training programs, reduced medicine programs and access as beneficiaries to social support projects (Envio, 201X). Many of these programs were funded by Daniel with an annual fund from Venezuela that went to the Sandinista Party and Daniel personally – there was no public trail or oversight; the funds did not go into the national budget overseen by the National Assembly or Congress. By incorporating teachers into this Sandinista Party structure on the ground in every community, Murillo could create and regulate a core of people who would act as spokespeople and activists with a large swath of the Nicaraguan population, speaking a common narrative and enacting shared values on government-designed projects. People would be inundated with Sandinista-speak and actions and community oversight, posing a threat to their privacy and ways of thinking, living and acting.

An empty values discourse. The Central American Jesuit University (UCA) criticized the belief that values made everything possible (see above) – from becoming the best student or teacher in the country to leading social, political, cultural transformation one Nicaraguan, family and community at a time. In their monthly journal, the Jesuit’s editorial team wrote that within that belief system “there are no effects of causes. Everything is reduced to attitudes.” Previous neoliberal governments used “this same trick,” they charged, making change dependent on “positive thinking and having a positive attitude about any problem”

particularly those problems “the same neoliberal model provokes or allows”²²¹ (Equipo Envío, March 2013). They reminded Nicaraguans how previous neoliberal governments “repeated and repeated” a message that “pretended to show us that a country’s economic development did not depend on its natural resources, its history, its geographic location, its culture, but rather on the ‘attitudes’ of its population...Everything was reduced to attitudes.”²²² The authors then analyzed Ortega’s “Good Government” and Murillo’s “Live Pretty” campaign.

The strategy of the current government is of the same neoliberal flavor. It pretends to promote ‘attitudes,’ forgetting the historic and conjunctural causes of the problems it wants to resolve. And even more grave, it pretends to change those attitudes ‘by decree,’ from above, by pure voluntariness of power.²²³ (Equipo Envío, 2013). Despite this analysis, all Nicaraguans I met and spoke with about values strongly believed values and attitudes could make virtually anything happen; if the entire nation could unify and act together, incredible things were possible.

Questions about GRUN claims of success: Propaganda or evaluation. Supervision provided a large incentive for teacher compliance in general, and for values education actions in particular. How teachers understood evaluation and supervision often influenced if and how they complied with values education actions. For “Live Pretty,” Murillo announced national, state and municipal teams that would provide “accompaniment, monitoring and follow-up to the campaign” (MINED INFORMA, February 27, 2013). The teams were never formed and no reporting addressed this change. Nevertheless, in less than one month of the campaign’s beginnings, Murillo and the GRUN declared the Campaign a resounding success – with no data collected to demonstrate their claim. Putting a successful public face on incipient and inchoate initiatives – like “Live Pretty” in March – before one could do any systematic evaluation was a common GRUN leadership style and organizing strategy.

²²¹ No hay efectos de causas. Todo queda reducido a actitudes. Es un truco reciente del capitalismo neoliberal para hacer depender del pensamiento positivo y de la actitud positiva ante cualquier problema la solución de los desastres que el mismo modelo neoliberal provoca o permite.

²²² Hace unos años se repitió y repitió en los canales de televisión un spot que pretendía demostrarnos que el desarrollo económico de los países no depende de sus recursos naturales, de su historia, de su ubicación geográfica, de su cultura, sino de las “actitudes” de su población... Todo se reducía a actitudes.

²²³ La estrategia actual del gobierno es de la misma especie neoliberal. Pretende promover “actitudes”, olvidando las causas históricas y coyunturales de los problemas que quiere resolver. Y aún más grave: pretende cambiar esas actitudes “por decreto”, desde arriba, a puro voluntarismo del poder.

Evaluation articles disseminated by the MINED were mainly unsubstantiated generalizations about a program's or school's success. They also included logic arguments, like Murillo's insistence that "Live Pretty's" transcendental nature was found in its focus on the community for the common good of all. A school principal asserted that it was sure to bring great impact by including more people each day "in the effort to build a new society where values to work for the common good prevail" (MINED INFORMA, February 4, 2013). "Living Pretty," according to MINED Minister Raudez "is an analysis and reflection during which everyone learns in this moment of universalization of education stemming from the rescue of values" (MINED INFORMA, February 27, 2013). It would help universalize elementary education and increase education quality through its impact – by putting values into action.

A greater budget, more teachers, more training was not evaluated or reported on. Gaps in knowledge, the effects of last-minute planning, or ambiguous and constantly changing orientations were not registered or worthy of mention. "Live Pretty," on the other hand, was an enormous success, Minister Raudez informed the public in February, the same month it began. Kids had returned to schools to find improved environments and their learning was improving. "It is implemented in the community for the benefit of the community, which will cause greater impact," the Assistant Principal in Managua assured the public. "More people will join each day to this effort to construct a new society where values of working for the common good will prevail" (MINED INFORMA, February 4, 2013). No data supported these optimistic assertions. No follow-up was provided. Instead, the MINED provided a steady stream of daily articles with quotes from municipal Delegates, pedagogic advisors and Managua principals – all Sandinista – speaking of the Campaign in similarly glowing terms, all reporting excellent (and unsubstantiated) results.

Every month the government announced success. In September, for example, it informed the general public that its National Campaign "had motivated the population to participate in processes of change from the family, to be protagonists in change" (MINED INFORMA, September 30, 2013). The Campaign was helping build a generalized sense of solidarity among the population, Murillo asserted. This was important to generate individual and collective commitments to the well-being of others, sharing or letting go of material goods, and sharing with others. Murillo used the Campaign to remind everyone how

committed they all were to similar Christian values including love, peace and reconciliation along with a preferential option for the poor. She congratulated people on changing their thinking, behaviors and values – for their own personal development as well as that of their family and community.

The GRUN touted improved education quality after every PD session or new school built. It downplayed its well-documented inability to provide universal elementary education for all school-age children, and the many denunciations of a “robotic” and “irrelevant” schooling system. Though the MINED collected a lot of mostly narrative data from teachers, it did not aggregate or analyze what it collected publicly. It made very little data public, and there was no national analysis across schools, children or regions. This made program evaluation difficult and virtually impossible for outside evaluators. It also made it impossible to check successes and other outcomes (like changing enrollment numbers) that the GRUN reported. To many, it was unclear if the GRUN’s aversion to systematic data collection and analysis was due to political concerns or lack of capacity – or a combination (Cáceres, 2014). People cited how the GRUN and MINED shared an institutional aversion to publicizing challenges in implementation and student performance. Instead, the MINED published individual success stories of one school or even one teacher.

Evaluation articles were written to incentivize and motivate people into the long-term, national project. Some educators pointed to how this tendency allowed GRUN and MINED officials to evade accountability and responsibility. If everything was reported as a success, if implementation was not successful in a particular school or community it had to be the fault of those implementing it on the ground. “It’s all on us,” a teacher commented to her colleagues at a TEPCE.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described a panorama of key shared and institutional beliefs about values and values education. They formed an influential macro context within each teacher’s psycho-socio environment and professional settings. Along with existing teacher knowledge and experiences as a teacher and learner, these widely shared and at times competing and overlapping beliefs influenced teachers’ understandings of each values education mandate received from superiors. Based on their understandings, teachers used different aspects and

combinations of these multiple beliefs systems to decide if and how to put which parts of a values education mandate into practice.

This understanding of the macro psycho-social context in which teachers worked provides a foundation for the following chapter in which I describe teacher experiences at the bottom of the government waterfall of values education efforts, in the San Jose de la Montana nucleus PD meetings. I analyze how teachers experienced the knowledge GRUN officials passed to them through the waterfall as well as the gaps in knowledge embedded in values mandates. I analyze how officials transmitted knowledge gaps through instructions, material resource accessibility and content – similar to how teachers transmitted knowledge gaps in the elementary classroom. I look at how combinations of knowledge, beliefs and knowledge gaps influenced teacher practice in two areas of values education: academic (e.g., cross-curricular pillars) and programmatic (e.g., the Integrated School Nutrition Program). In the third and final findings chapter, I analyze four prominent beliefs systems that teachers said influenced their values education practice, including differing beliefs about what values education (and anti-values behaviors) were a priority to tackle in schooling, and how political party identity and related beliefs about the Sandinista Party, Ortega and Murillo influenced teacher practice in values education.

Chapter Eight

Transmitting and Receiving Knowledge and Knowledge Gaps in Values Education

Teacher experiences, understandings and practice at the bottom of the waterfall

Teachers received over a dozen values orientations each month at the TEPCE and through informal communication networks they created with colleagues. In each case, officials passed orientations from national to state to municipal MINED officials, who passed them to all teachers assembled in a TEPCE or, outside of the formal TEPCE environment, to one teacher they saw at MINED offices or on a bus. In (the latter) more happenstance interactions, officials charged each teacher they saw with communicating the orientation to their colleagues. With enormous pressure from national, state and municipal MINED leaders on classroom teachers to comply as one uniform group (with colleagues and community leaders), the clearest path of least resistance and lowest risk was faithful compliance with each MINED orientation. Most teachers did not follow this path, for different reasons according to each orientation.

Teachers regularly adapted MINED orientations in line with a combination of their understandings and what they determined as shared, official, and individual beliefs and knowledge related to each orientation. To understand variations in how and why teachers implemented different aspects of values education, I analyze in this chapter how teachers experienced the MINED waterfall in relation to knowledge and knowledge gaps in values orientations it transmitted. This experience was critical to teacher decisions regarding if, how, when and with whom they implemented required values actions. In the following chapter, I add to this one with an analysis of how teachers experienced the waterfall in relation to what they deemed the most prominent shared, official and individual beliefs in values education.

I begin this chapter examining teacher experiences in values PD. Using vignettes from “Live Pretty” trainings, I analyze how MINED officials normalized and institutionalized copying and uniformity in teacher planning, instruction and evaluation. Though they publicly condemned these methods as “memoristic” and “traditional,” they relied upon them to ensure uniform implementation of orientations across all teachers and schools. Here I look at how they did this in their largest values campaign and program

components. Despite this attempt at alignment, coherency, and uniformity, the waterfall's simplified messages and one-size-fits-all procedures included both knowledge and knowledge gaps that directly contributed to variations in teacher understandings and practice. I examine several prominent combinations of knowledge gaps (and beliefs about these) transmitted by municipal and national leaders: access to cognitive resources through verbal instructions and content, and to material resources like official written documents. I finish the chapter analyzing how teachers negotiated the knowledge officials provided with accompanying gaps in two critical areas: cross-curricular pillars (academic) and the Integrated School Nutrition Program (social). This provides a framework for understanding how knowledge and knowledge gaps affected teacher implementation of each values education mandate (i.e., project, program, campaign action, commemoration, report).

Teacher experiences of the GRUN values waterfall: Inundation from top to bottom

Teachers experienced the GRUN values waterfall on multiple fronts concurrently. Officials saturated radio and television airwaves with Sandinista values discourse. Values were included on every flyer, political *pinta* (spray-painted messages on public and private walls) and national commemoration or speech. MINED officials transmitted values in all information and orientations they gave their staff and public servants. In communities, local leaders – including school principals – used the same values discourse when identifying project beneficiaries and implementing GRUN values projects or actions. In the following section, I analyze one of these contexts: teacher PD. The vignettes underscore teacher understandings of GRUN values and beliefs as they adapted Murillo's national plan to their individual and school-wide "Live Pretty" plans, following MINED orientations provided by the San José nucleus facilitators.

Copying MINED text, Creating Uniform Plans

MINED officials inundated teachers with values information as a method to help them plan how to inundate every school community with the government's values actions. During the final day of the 5-day "Live Pretty" training, facilitators guided teachers to create individual and school plans. The plans guided teachers to initiate the "Live Pretty" campaign in the same way at the same time, through a handful of coordinated actions in their respective communities. MINED teacher trainers facilitated the propagation of Murillo's one national plan into 55,000 individual plans in just a few hours the same Friday morning: February 8. I

attended the Friday meeting. In December, it was scheduled as the first TEPCE but in late January the MINED moved the TEPCE to February 1, the first day teachers were on contract, to accomodate the week-long training on “Live Pretty.” This accomodation erased all enrollment work teachers usually did in their school communities before classes began on February 11 – an effect Murillo created while holding teachers fully accountable for increasing enrollment that year and every year.

Group copying was a primary transmission (and teaching) tool in all schooling: in MINED PD, elementary and high school classrooms. In PD, copying (written and dictated information) was an efficient method to transmit official (GRUN) information in the same way to thousands of teachers and principals. Teachers produced verbatim hand-written replicas as a required outcome. The Live Pretty planning process at the bottom of the waterfall provided one example of how teachers experienced and understood MINED expectations of uniformity and compliance, and how they negotiated and acted upon these perceived expectations and outside of them.

Copying one national plan into 55,000 “Live Pretty” plans. The nucleus principal, Profe Rosibel, held a copy of Murillo’s “Live Pretty” plan in front of the 53 nucleus teachers seated before her. The plan was entitled, “Plan of Actions to Carry Out the Pillars of the National Strategy, Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well...!”

This is a plan at the national level. You are to use it as an example, something you will adapt to your local conditions in the community. If you look at it quickly, it has 32 pages and a series of aspects – let’s see [she flips through it] – fourteen aspects. After each one of these, it has activities one can do, some with concrete dates and others to be done on a permanent basis. This is a base document, an example.²²⁴

Rosibel then wrote five headings in a mock 5-column table on the blackboard. The first column (farthest left) was titled, “Actions.” Teachers were to copy at least a part (most or all) of each of Murillo’s 14 points into the actions column of their plans. “You take each action here,” Rosibel held the national plan high, “and then fill in the other four columns for each action,” she said pointing to the board: Norms, Dates, Person Responsible, and

²²⁴ Plan de Acciones para la Realización de los Ejes de la Estrategia Nacional, ¡Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien...! Este es un plan a nivel nacional. Lo van a utilizar como ejemplo, algo que adaptaran a las condiciones locales de su comunidad. Si lo revisas rapidito, vas a ver que tiene 32 páginas y una serie de aspectos, vamos a ver, 14 aspectos. Después de cada uno, tiene actividades que uno puede hacer, algunas con fechas específicas y otros donde señalan que es de ejecutar en forma permanente. Este es un documento base, un ejemplar.

Observations²²⁵. As with all teacher plans and planning (i.e., annual operational plans, monthly program plans, daily lesson plans), this was a straightforward copying exercise. There was no time to discuss plan details in this setting. The focus was to produce the required MINED product (a copied plan) in a few hours, and report to superiors the number of plans written that morning. National MINED officials allotted time for Municipal MINED officials to present the plan's content, communicate the 5-column format for replication, and provide a deadline to complete the final product. Every teacher had to present their plan in the correct format with the correct information by 2pm in the state capital offices that same afternoon (a trip of at least one hour on two buses) or MINED officials failed their mandate. Below I present edited excerpts from "Live Pretty" PD field notes.

The group of 24 multigrade teachers split into two large groups in different parts of the classroom. The high school teachers left for classrooms on the lower level of the school grounds. In our group of eleven, Professors Gera and Dinora from La Montañita School began the task at hand, first tracing 5-column tables on several sheets of blank paper the facilitators provided. They talked about their lives with different people around them as they expertly drew straight lines across the page in rapid succession, neatly, quickly. Once they had four pages with a blank table, they began to fill it in.

The first point in the national plan was to do a community diagnostic study. Profe Gera read the point aloud several times. She and Dino decided their plan's action would be to call an Assembly with the community. "Read the text slowly," Dino told Gera. Gera dictated the first point, breaking up the sentence into phrases of three to four words each that she repeated several times until Dino copied the entire text into the top left column of the blank table. "Carry out a General Assembly with members of the Cabinet of Family, Community and Life, Parents Association, community in general to let people know about the campaign, 'Live clean, live healthy, live pretty, live well!'"²²⁶ The action's "Norm" was "They should attend the Assembly through the teachers."²²⁷ Action dates were February 11-15²²⁸ (the following week), and the people responsible were "teacher."²²⁹ Their additional observations were to

²²⁵ Normas, fechas, responsable(s), observaciones

²²⁶ Realizar una Asamblea General con miembros del gabinete (de la familia, salud y vida), Asociación de Padres de familia, comunidad en general para dar a conocer la campana ¡Vivir limpio, vivir sano, vivir bonito, vivir bien!

²²⁷ Deberán asistir a la Asamblea a través de los docentes

²²⁸ 11 - 15 de febrero de 2013

²²⁹ docente

“Integrate different community organizations.”²³⁰ They read Murillo’s point and theirs one more time to compare, and then moved on to Murillo’s point number two.

The other nine teachers talked amongst themselves in pairs and small groups. When there was a lull in the side conversations, someone would ask to no one in particular, “What are we supposed to do?” Usually no one answered. Sometimes the question got a shrug or a glance over towards Dino and Gera working at their desks. Several times a teacher looked around and noted, “They [facilitators] have all left” and “They’re probably in the office. We’ll ask when they come back.” A side conversation then drew people back into the personal banter.

When Dino had filled in the first page of the table she celebrated. “First page, done!” she said loudly, holding the sheet of paper in the air and waving it around for all to see. Two teachers took note. One moved her desk to Dino’s side while her colleague dragged her desk to her left. They began to form what would become a massive copying line. The teacher to Dino’s left leaned over to read the text in Dino’s table. At first, Dino hid the first page under the new page she was beginning to fill. The teacher had to ask to see it for each action she copied, looking back and forth between her page and Dino’s page. The fourth teacher copied from her colleague’s copy of Dino and Gera’s plan onto her own page, her head moving back and forth between her colleague’s desk and her own.

Within fifteen minutes the line of desks became a semi-circle of eight teachers. Within another 25 minutes it was a closed circle of eleven teachers with Dino and Gera the original text generators copying from Murillo’s national plan. It was almost 9:15 a.m. when the group of teachers settled into this copying routine, a mini-replication of information flowing from the national offices (the plan) to San Jose’s state and municipal officials (the facilitators) to all its classroom teachers.

Teacher copying in PD mirrored much of how teachers expected students to learn through copying in elementary classrooms. MINED officials, teachers and students focused on the logistics of information transmission: copying word for word in a specific format with neat handwriting and good spelling. During the PD above, teachers created eleven plans for six multigrade schools that were exact replicas of each other in less than two hours. As almost word for word copies of the first nine points from Murillo’s 14-point plan (a few teachers copied up to 11), teachers copied between 64% and 79% of Murillo’s national plan – a similar percentage of text students copied during academic content lessons. Teachers

²³⁰ Integrar a las diferentes organizaciones de la comunidad

deemed this percentage “sufficient” in the MINED’s eyes “because we do the other stuff” and “they will let us leave with this done!” a few teachers remarked. “This is enough!” Liria exclaimed as a response to why she did not include Murillo’s last five points in her plan. Another teacher one other reason why the plan was universally truncated by all multigrade nucleus teachers: “time ran out.” Students voiced similar reasons for not completely copying assigned text (while young students faced developmental challenges to the copying rigor of school learning, explained in a separate article).

Group copying created plans with the same actions (“ coordinations,” “gatherings” and “work days”²³¹), the same list of actors (Municipal Town Hall/Sandinista Mayor, MARENA²³² – environment, MINSA²³³ – health, non-governmental organizations), and the same objectives: “to promote values of good practices,” the “formation of values, *convivencia*, respect, self-esteem, communication to rescue culture and values” and to “establish coordinations with members of the Sandinista Youth...that lead the citizenry to live a healthy life,” and “Live a healthier life. Change life and attitude. Improve the family economy.”²³⁴ This uniformity in plans and reports helped municipal supervisors aggregate each teacher’s individual report or plan into one municipal report that documented teacher participation and compliance to state supervisors. Liria characterized this part of a teacher’s work in PD as “facilitating their work, for example, [the work] of the [Municipal] Delegate.” She explained: “Because one does a job and s/he submits it to [the pedagogic advisors] and they put it all in order from all the schools that have done it, they compile and review it, and all that.”²³⁵ To Liria and many of her colleagues, teachers did all the work writing endless

²³¹ Coordinaciones, encuentros, jornadas

²³² Ministerio del Ambiente y los Recursos Naturales (Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources). The government changed the Ministry’s name in 2016 to SINIA-MARENA, Sistema Nacional de Información Ambiental (National System of Environmental Information). On their website, they had only Sinia (not written as an acronym) with the GRUN slogans on the left and the annual slogan on the right. “2016: Vamos Adelante! (sic) En Buena Esperanza, En Victorias! (sic)” (“2016: Let’s go Forward! In Good Hope, In Victories!”) A second MARENA website had the slogan, “Amor a Nicaragua, Amor a Nuestra Madre Tierra” (“Love of Nicaragua, Love of Our Mother Earth”).

²³³ Ministerio de Salud (Ministry of Health)

²³⁴ Promover valores de buenas practicas, la formacion de valores, convivencia, respeto, auto-estima, comunicacion para rescatar la cultura y valores, La formacion de valores, convivencia, respeto, autoestima, comunicacion para lograr el rescate de la cultura y valores. Establecer coordinaciones con miembros de la Juventud Sandinista ...que conllevan a la ciudadania a vivir una vida sana.Vive una vida mas sana. Cambie de vida y actitud. Mejore la economia familiar.

²³⁵ ...facilitarle el trabajo, por ejemplo, de la Delegada. Porque uno realiza una, un trabajo y a ellos se los entrega y ellos llevan el orden de las escuelas que lo han entregado, complementan el trabajo y lo revisan y todo. Pero en sí, relación tal vez cuando llegan a supervisar, a acompañarlo a uno, ellos siempre vienen a

numbers of reports national MINED officials demanded. The Municipal and State officials – teachers’ supervisors – communicated the need for a report and its deadline to teachers and then collected and compiled reports to send to their supervisors. State MINED offices collected and compiled all municipal reports to send to the national offices. Supervisors relied on written teacher reports to carry out the majority of their work.

Mass copying in each nucleus around the country on the same Friday morning February 8th ensured uniform content in all teachers’ written “Live Pretty” plans. The MINED used these uniform written products to evaluate their success. After 55,000 teachers attended PD and submitted their “Live Pretty” plans that looked a lot like Murillo’s national plan, the MINED touted the training “a great success.” It repeatedly asserted that through the training, teachers “took an enormous step towards improving education quality” (MINED INFORMA).

On the ground, uniform plans did not ensure uniform implementation. Teachers made small adaptations to local conditions or their knowledge (i.e., how to implement a diagnostic in the community). When they did not understand something in the plan or did not agree with it, they skipped it or let the principal take charge as the MINED rector at each school. In PD, most teachers copied Murillo’s points verbatim and did not put much attention to their future implementation. They decided later – at their schools and physically removed from MINED officials – about if, how and with whom they would implement each point. For most of these decisions, teachers relied on their colleagues along with their own beliefs, knowledge and experiences regarding each values orientation. In the next section, I look at how values PD – particularly in its transitions from whole group to small group work and during its mass copying requirements – helped strengthen teacher collegiality and decision-making as teachers followed parts of their uniform “Live Pretty” plans and adapted or ignored others.

Group copying strengthened collegiality. Each classroom teacher was responsible for understanding the content of the MINED’s master or exemplary plans and how to implement them. Many teachers relied on close colleagues to make implementation decisions, and an unspoken result of PD was how teachers used the time and space to strengthen collegial ties with each other. This occurred throughout the PD day in whole and

fiscalizar que uno ande el machete, verdad, trabajando con su machete. Y, pero en si no viendo tal vez las dificultades que uno está presentando en el centro...

small group discussions, as well as during transitions teachers extended when moving from whole group reflections and announcements at the very beginning of each session to small group work. Facilitators let teachers organize transitions by choosing their own groups which usually fell along the same lines: two to four groups of multigrade teachers, one group of preschool educators, and at least two groups of high school teachers (which fell along Sandinista/Liberal Party lines).

Facilitators often gave verbal instructions regarding small group work and then retreated to the school office at the top of the five-level campus, leaving teachers to decide how to understand and begin assigned small group tasks. In PD and the elementary classrooms, teachers and students (respectively) extended transitions from receiving an assignment to beginning to work on it for up to one hour or more. Many did not take out their notebooks or begin to read a provided text until the facilitator/teacher had reminded them to do so multiple times. Multigrade teachers followed this routine regularly in their classrooms, beginning each day by copying “Content:” with a phrase, followed by a series of exercises copied onto the board for each grade from a planning notebook with brief instructions (a written phrase or verbal reminder). When a teacher finished providing assignments, they often physically left the classroom or sat in a student desk to wait for students to bring their work to them to check.

In PD, teachers used this time to relay personal stories about recent experiences, mostly related to illnesses they or a family member were suffering, medicines they were taking or were supposed to be taking but could not, a recent visit to the health clinic or hospital, or natural medicines they recommended to each other. Faith was another common topic. These conversations cemented collegial relationships and socio-professional networks teachers created to manage the stress of their work, make decisions about their practice, and communicate last-minute MINED mandates. In elementary classrooms, students used this time to cement relationships, rough-house and play, and hone their skills in conflict management, conflict creation and resolution, or self-defense.

In addition to extended transitions, teachers used the MINED’s penchant for demanding written products copied word-for-word to maintain side conversations while they copied. Teachers and students alike became experts at multi-tasking while copying copious amounts of text. Teachers, unlike students, copied the same text multiple times each month

so their copying routine did not affect the content copied like it with students (who copied incorrectly or incompletely more often than not). Teachers continued free-ranging personal conversations while copying, at times related to the content copied. These conversations showed teachers how they faced similar challenges and aligned analogous discourses around challenges they faced with students and families, teaching and learning, and the MINED.

When a teacher ripped out a page in her notebook, a colleague was reminded of students who avoided doing homework by ripping out the pages with homework assignments before they got home, and then told family members the teacher did not give any homework. “I have students who when I give them homework they just rip out the pages in their notebook.” Teachers around her murmured in agreement and nodded repeatedly as she spoke. I had observed this behavior in almost all classrooms I visited. “I have two students from the same family, and they finish their notebooks and they are just the cover. There are no pages left because they rip the pages out.” Others complained that they could not tell if and when students did homework because “wherever they open the notebook, that’s where they do the work. One day it’s at the front, another at the back, right side up, upside down, however they please.”

Shared experiences often became extended, animated discussions of many challenges teachers faced with students and family. Sometimes listening was all that was necessary, with some commiseration – they were not alone. Sometimes teachers offered each other advice. Most if not all the teachers continued to copy while listening to their colleagues’ travails. “I have a student who asked to be retained. He said he didn’t care.” The teacher laughed and several teachers around her laughed as well, nodding their heads, eyes on the page and text they copy. Several said they had similar situations. The teacher continued.

But a retained student looks bad on me, and then they [pedagogic advisors] say I’m not doing my job! I’m not teaching my students well enough! What do you do when they don’t come to class, or they come and just don’t care. They come to just play and play and play. That’s it. To get out of the house and get away from their parents! I tell them they’re never going to learn, and he says, “Profe, retain me, then.”²³⁶

²³⁶ Pero un estudiante reprobado refleja mal a mi, y después ellos dicen que no estoy haciendo mi trabajo! Que no estoy enseñando a los chigüines bien, suficiente. ¿Y qué deberías hacer cuando no llegan a clase? ¿O llegan y les vale pepa? Ellos vienen solo para jugar y jugar y jugar. Eso es todo. Para salir de la casa ¡y huir de los padres! Yo les digo que nunca van a aprender nada, y el dice, “Profe, mantégame en este grado entonces.”

Teachers were concerned about their students and how student behaviors reflected on them – and could affect their jobs.

These conversations bounced from one story to another with memories of different events triggered by a key word or phrase. The above story led to a round of stories about parents not helping or parents helping too much (doing school work for their children) – both common issues teachers often felt adrift on how to address. Stories then shifted to students who were not going to pass the year because of illness, absences and disabilities. One was diabetic, another had severe allergies, another had a physical disability that prevented him from attending most days, another broke his glasses and his mom didn't have the money to replace them. "And they don't take that into account. They just see the low grade and say we're not doing our job!"²³⁷

Sometimes the content of what they copied guided these free-form conversations. As teachers copied Murillo's action to do house visits on a permanent basis, they talked about visiting people's homes or insisting parents come talk to them at school. Several copied the point into their plan "even though we can never do this throughout the school year. She [Murillo] has no idea what that would mean." At one point a teacher stopped. "Listen to it," she said and read out loud: "Carry out house visits to verify compliance with the central pillars of the campaign. What's the norm?" They decided to put "make clear the importance of living clean, living healthy, living pretty, living well." Then teachers began another round of sharing problems they encountered with families, sometimes sharing solutions. "I don't know about house visits," Ambrosia offered. "I have moms come to the classroom."

I worked with one mom for a time because her son comes to school and does nothing except fight with everyone. So she [the mother] came to school for a few days to see how he was acting. When the mom is not there, he doesn't do his work and he hits other boys and even other girls. I tell him, 'You should be ashamed of yourself for hitting girls!' but it doesn't stop him. Then, when his mom is there she does the work for him. She sits at his desk, has him sit in her lap, and does his work. Then she brings it to me and says, 'See? He can do it!'²³⁸

²³⁷ Y no lo toman en cuenta. Solo ven la calificación baja y pronuncian que no estamos haciendo nuestro trabajo.

²³⁸ Yo no se sobre las visitas en casa. Las mamás que tengo llegan al aula. Yo trabajé con una mamá para un rato porque su hijo llega y no hace nada más que pelear con todos los demás. Entonces, ella vino para unos días para ver como estaba comportando. Cuando la mamá no está, él no hace su trabajo y pega a otros chavalos y aun a algunas chavalas. Yo le digo, "Deberías tener vergüenza por pegar a las chavalas!" pero eso no lo detiene. Después, cuando la mamá está, ella hace su trabajo por él. Se sienta en su escritorio, lo pone en sus piernas, y le hace el trabajo. Después, me lo trae a mí ella y dice, "Ves? Él sí puede hacerlo!"

Liria then jumped in.

I have a second grader who rarely comes to class, maybe once a week, once every two weeks. I spoke to the grandmother, I spoke to her sisters. The grandmother says if she comes to school someone will steal the chickens, or the pig, so she can't come to talk with me. She's more concerned about her animals than she is about her grandchild!

Many teachers shouted out agreement to this, and I heard it regularly in all classrooms and Fausto's Assembly. Liria continued.

I have another boy, a third grader, who refuses to do his work. So I worked with his mom and showed her the assignments. I told her to help her son study, but she works every day. I gave him the exam three times and he still didn't reach 60 points. I let her sit with him the fourth time and they didn't pass it together. I gave a guide with all the questions and answers and sent it home. He still failed, didn't even get to 40 points. He refused to transcribe! I can't take the test for him! And the [pedagogic] advisors tell me I'm not motivated and I'm not doing my part. They never say it's the students or the family. Now I have several moms demanding I give their kids a grade of 60, passing them so easily. They don't make them study, and they blame me!²³⁹

The conversation steered into sharing interactions with pedagogic advisors accusing teachers of different things, from not doing daily lesson plans to grading too easy to grading too hard.

Another Murillo action called on parents to express their appreciation for the GRUN's role in helping people restore their rights to nutrition and other aspects of a quality education, and this spawned another conversation about how difficult it was to work with parents, how few parents expressed appreciation for teachers, and how it was not their responsibility to force them to express appreciation for the GRUN. Everyone included the point in their plan anyway. Writing it into each plan reinforced at least two GRUN objectives: if it was included it might happen and it could be supervised. When the MINED visited each school, they

²³⁹ Yo tengo una nina en segunda. Que casi nunca llega, quizás una vez por semana, o cada dos semanas. Hablé con su abuela, hablé con sus hermanas. La abuela dice que si ella visita la escuela alguien robará sus gallinas, la cerda, y por eso no puede llegar para hablar conmigo. ¡Está más preocupada por sus animales que por su nieta! Tengo otro chavalo, de tercero, que rehusa hacer su trabajo. Entonces, yo trabajé con la mamá y le mostré las tareas. Le dije que debería ayudar a su hijo a estudiar en casa, pero ella trabaja toditos los días. Le di el examen al chavalo tres veces y aun así no logró los 60 puntos. La dejé que se sentara allí con él la cuarta vez ¡y no pudieron pasar el examen juntos! Le di una guía de estudio con todas las preguntas y respuestas, y se la mandé a casa. Aún así fracasó, no llegó ni a los 40 puntos. El rehuso transcribir. No puedo tomar el examen por él. Y los asesores me dicen que yo no estoy motivada and no estoy haciendo mi parte. Nunca dicen que son los estudiantes o los padres. Ahora tengo varias mamás exigiendo que les doy una nota de 60 a sus chavalos, de pasarlos así de fácil. No les hacen estudiar en casa, ¡y ellos me culpan a mi!

mostly checked written plans to see if teachers included mandatory content. Teachers were confident that by putting it in the plan they would not be written up during a MINED visit.

Murillo's action to form the parent committee for food (that all had created and enacted already) inspired a round of conversations related to challenges they had encountered and successes they could celebrate. Some shared methods they used to coordinate their school food program. One teacher said parents took charge of everything and "I don't have to even think about it."²⁴⁰ Several others complained about the time they spent coordinating with the MINED warehouse for food pick-up. In Los Jocotes, the warehouse coordinator called Liria the day before that she had to come get food the next morning or else he would send it elsewhere. The rest of the morning she worked to find a pick-up driver and parents who could travel with her into town. The following year, the community decided to send the food on the bus. They lost one 100-pound sack of corn that remained on the bus. Someone else had unloaded it further down the road, and Liria had to find the bag and get it delivered back to the school. Both Fausto and Reina used 5th and 6th grade boys to load and unload the 100-pound sacks, something the MINED prohibited. "But if parents won't do it, like at our school," Reina explained, "we don't have a choice. Plus, the boys like to do it."²⁴¹ Several teachers commented that they appreciated Murillo including CAE in "Live Pretty" because it "made clear to parents" that they needed to "appropriate their shared responsibility."²⁴²

Teachers relied on collegiality and relationships among each other to help the massive copying chore go by faster, and more importantly to understand MINED orientations and expectations, and decide what and how to implement them. Collegiality and these informal conversations during PD helped teachers overcome challenges in and out of PD, challenges often created by MINED officials and sudden changes in policies and programs. The need for teachers' informal socio-professional network was apparent during the "Live Pretty" training, particularly when the facilitators announced an enormous change in the last hour of the session – a change that mandated they throw out what they had done and begin anew. I describe the interactions and how teachers approached this together in the section below.

²⁴⁰ Yo no tengo que pensar ni preocuparme por él.

²⁴¹ Pero si los padres rehúsan hacerlo, como en mi escuela, no tenemos elección. Además, a los muchachos les gusta hacerlo. Salen del aula para un ratito.

²⁴² Les pone clarito a los padres de familia que tienen que apropiar sus responsabilidades.

Group copying, collegiality and uniformity amidst constant change. MINED

officials communicated and enforced last-minute changes to government policies and programs through the waterfall of information to large groups of teachers at the same time (see “contrarianism” section in Chapter 4). Teachers were expert at understanding and coping with constantly changing instructions, policies and programs (and their implementation), and written documentation requirements. Change imposed from above (from national officials, often Murillo) was a distinguishing feature of their socio-professional lives and work. The last day of the “Live Pretty” training produced a series of surprises and changes teachers deftly negotiated. The first had been a surprise announcement that they had to pay a fee to receive the document they needed to comply with that day’s work: Murillo’s national “Live Pretty” plan. The four surprise fees they had paid the previous days of “Live Pretty” PD had all allowed teachers to pay the following day, but that Friday was the last day and facilitators rarely paid out of their own pocket. They had to recuperate the money and they insisted teachers pay for their copy in that moment or they would not receive the document. It was a requirement many teachers were unable to do.^{lxxvi} Facilitators did not tell them the previous day to bring money to pay for the day’s document – or even check if that were possible. To resolve the problem, teachers immediately shared their resources and coordinated how they would get copies later and distribute them. It fell on teachers to ensure no one got written up for not doing their job, which they ensured, even though the challenge was created by MINED officials.

The last surprise of the day was more difficult to surmount: a last-minute change after 11am to re-do the work teachers had done that morning in a different format. Teachers farthest ahead in copying were transcribing point 7 of Murillo’s plan when Profe Rosibel walked briskly into the room, Fausto on her heels. “Attention! Attention!” he shouted as the pair entered. “We have an important announcement.”²⁴³

- 1 *FAUSTO: We are not going to fill in tables today. I just called the Ministry,*
- 2 *and they said, ‘No tables.’ The man doesn’t want to see any tables. No tables.*
- 3 *TEACH: Then what are we doing?!?*
- 4 *TEACH: Who’s the man?*
- 5 *TEACH: Yes, who’s the man?*

²⁴³ ¡Atención! ¡Atención! Tenemos un anuncio muy importante.

6 *FAUSTO: Oscar. Oscar! [The head of the Municipal MINED pedagogic*
7 *advisor team]*
8 *TEACH: What are you talking about?*
9 *TEACH: Why did you call the Ministry?*
10 *FAUSTO: All he wants is a list of actions with dates, a list, una chorreada.*
11 *[He holds up an empty legal size sheet of paper and moves his finger down*
12 *from the top of the page to the bottom as he repeats that they only want a long*
13 *list of actions.]*
14
15 *No one has a list as he describes. They all followed Rosibel's instructions to*
16 *write the plan as a table in the 5-column format. That format is still on the*
17 *board where Rosibel wrote it.*
18
19 *A teacher immediately voices a logistical obstacle to complying with this*
20 *change.*
21 *TEACH: We don't have any paper.*
22 *TEACH: Yeah, we don't have any paper left so how are we going to do that*
23 *without paper?*
24 *TEACH: We can't do it without paper.*
25
26 *Others begin to voice the idea to boycott the MINED's last-minute change.*
27 *TEACH: Don't do it. This is how it's been all week. We start to do one thing*
28 *then they orient to something else. It makes one think we're not doing*
29 *anything, right?*
30 *TEACH: We would have delivered this already! Why did you call the MINED?*
31 *TEACH: They have to learn to work by their word. Let's continue this way*
32 *and deliver it this way.*
33 *TEACH: Let's finish this way.*
34
35 *Then, what the change implies begins to set in.*
36 *TEACH: We'll be here all day if we do the list. Let's just continue as we were*
37 *– we're almost done.*
38 *TEACH: I'm hungry. Are they going to give us a snack?*
39 *TEACH: Are you kidding? They never give us anything.*
40 *TEACH: I have a baby to attend to! I can't stay! I have to get home! My baby*
41 *needs me!*

Rosibel and Fausto left. They repeated the demand of “no tables” and “just a list” several times without addressing the other concerns teachers raised. As they

continued to comment on the change, its effects and how to respond, teachers turned back to their work of copying. They could do both while sharing their thoughts.

Most teachers continued copying the plan into their tables the same way they had been all morning. Three teachers read the national plan, developed shortened wording for their actions, and then decided on norms, responsible, dates and observations for each action. Everyone else copied from the teacher to their left or right depending on their position in the circle.

About ten minutes later, Rosibel returned to the room briefly. “You need to leave a clean copy with me before you leave!” she shouted from the door. This provoked a whirlwind of teachers demanding more unlined, blank paper, which Rosibel provided.

Within 10-15 minutes, most teachers began to copy their “Live Pretty” plan for a third time. The teachers were mini-copying machines, experts at developing a master copy from copies they had already copied two or three times. They assigned some to making the tables, others to beginning the new copies, and still others to finishing the final points – what would be nine, ten or eleven point plans.

For the Los Jocotes plan, Liria put Marginy (the pre-school teacher) to dictate the plan aloud to her up to point 7. She wrote the dictated information onto a new, blank table. They had stopped at point 7 when Fausto and Rosibel interrupted. Liria assigned me to copy points 8 to 11 from the teacher on my right. When I finished, I gave points 8 to 11 to Liria so she could copy them one more time – once she finished re-copying points 1 to 7 with Marginy. She then put Marginy to copy these as well. By the end, they each had one complete copy of points 1-11, two incomplete copies (of 1-7 and 8-11), and one complete copy for the principal/MINED. There were no photocopiers in rural communities and traveling to pay for copies cost the same as a family meal.

A small group of teachers who either finished their plans or stopped making them in table format sat together and dictated a list of actions to give “to the man,” Oscar, the pedagogic advisor. “It might not be his chorriada,” one said, “but he has to accept it!” Another teacher reminded the group they had to do an evaluation. “Who is going to do the evaluation?” one of the teachers working on the chorriada asked the group. Two of the youngest teachers volunteered.

The teachers’ evaluation of that Friday session included several strengths: “started on time,” “good participation” and “ended on time.” They quickly decided

not to include weaknesses or recommendations. They were not going to mention the orientation mix-up because “we don’t want them coming to ask us about it, or have problems.” With no written record, it was if the MINED had requested the chorriada of actions from the beginning, the table format had never been on the board, and teachers had not filled in pages of tables for almost two hours. Every teacher took her plan home “in case they ask for it later on,” one said. “You never know,” another agreed. “Even if they come up with a different format, some of the columns may be the same!”

The exchanges above demonstrated how teachers experienced MINED contrarianism in action – and how they still maintained uniformity in their final written products. MINED officials in a far-away office often announced changes to their own orientations with no discussion, and no recognition of the work teachers had already done. Facilitators communicated these changes and received the wrath of their colleagues directly. They had little to no information regarding why the change or even what, sometimes, it entailed – since it was last-minute and communicated by telephone as a message (information transmission). The facilitators in San Jose simply repeated the main phrases: “No tables” and “just a list” (lines 2, 10, 36). As middle level officials towards the bottom of the waterfall, they straddled the Sandinista Party focus of their work that was the priority of their superiors with the practical implementation focus that was the priority of their colleagues whom they trained.

Classroom teachers responded to changes in different ways, as demonstrated in the interactions captured in the vignette above. Most complained vocally, and referred to the many times officials had told them to re-do and re-submit work; it was a MINED norm. “Even when we do exactly what they tell us to do, they come back to tell us we are not doing it right,” one complained, while another pointed out that “When they change it they still blame us.”²⁴⁴

The work dynamic was obviously frustrating and at times infuriating to all of them. The school nucleus and PD groups were a place where they could vocalize this frustration, even if only to vent before complying with the change imposed upon them. Some teachers in the vignette dispatched a rebuke of the MINED cloaked in a weak justification for not being able to comply: the logistical issue of not having paper (lines 21-24). Others spurned the

²⁴⁴ Aún cuando hacemos lo que nos dicen como nos dicen, vuelvan a decirnos que no estamos haciéndolo bien. Cuando cambian [la orientación], todavía nos echan la culpa en nosotros.

change by immediately talking boycott (lines 26-33). Still others ignored the commotion and continued their work as if facilitators had never announced the change. Some encouraged they all take this tack in an effort to organize a coordinated boycott of the change while complying with the original mandate of the morning (lines 36-41). The entire group continued to copy Murillo's plan into the table format for the next 15-20 minutes. In the end, though, while most teachers expressed frustrations, ignored the change initially or threatened to not respond, a small group searched for measured ways to comply – from full compliance to minimal compliance to appearances of compliance that avoided anyone getting into trouble with supervisors. They openly discussed how to comply enough to not raise attention to themselves or their work while making sure, as Liria commented to Marjini as they both copied the last parts of the third hand-written copy of their “Live Pretty” plan, “we won’t kill ourselves with this.”²⁴⁵

Teachers used group and individual copying skills to produce a plan of action and comply with what the MINED required. The main audience was MINED supervisors with the main motivator avoiding trouble for perceived non-compliance. Pointing out MINED responsibility for bad communication or last-minute changes was never an option, and neither was requesting more time. National officials required all plans to be in municipal offices that afternoon, and everyone took that expectation as an order. In group evaluations of the entire session, teachers did not document the sudden, last-minute change or its effects from that day. They did keep their 5-column plans that the MINED today rejected “in case they change their minds one more time”²⁴⁶ and requested the original plans after all.

As mentioned above, a common teacher response to change was to raise logistical impediments to compliance. It was impossible to comply because “we don’t have any paper” (line 21) and “we can’t do it without paper” (line 24). Students provided these kinds of justifications in the elementary classroom as well: “I didn’t bring a pencil,” “I don’t have a pen,” or “I don’t have a pencil sharpener” were daily responses by students who did not begin an assignment. Just like in the elementary classroom, the teachers in PD knew their logistical argument was weak. The facilitators had extra paper in the office and only needed

²⁴⁵ No nos vamos a matar por esto.

²⁴⁶ Por si acaso ellos cambian sus mentes otra vez.

to bring it to the group, which they did. No teacher went to ask for paper. Instead, they “make them work a little while we work a lot.”

Boycott was a second kind of teacher response to a new mandate. A vocal call to boycott grew out of growing frustration at the end of a long week of changes, as one teacher pointed out when she described the effects of “how it’s been all week. We start to do one thing then they orient to something else” (lines 27-28). The effect, echoed by many present was, “It makes one think we’re not doing anything, right?” (line 28-29) and the knowledge that “we could have delivered this already!” (line 30) and the time and work lost for naught. Teacher frustrations also stemmed from the realization that they would have to stay much longer than planned. Many had not had breakfast, or, like Liria, had eaten at 4am before leaving the house to get to PD before 9am. MINED officials, one teacher chided “never give us anything,” a pointed reference to the impossibility of receiving a snack to hold them over during their MINED-induced extended stay and to the fact that they had paid for copies of every document the MINED required they use during the one-week training. It had been an expense many teachers could not afford on their limited salary but one they had been forced to incur to comply. The MINED was oblivious to personal conditions – including situations like the teacher who exclaimed, “I have a baby to attend to! I can’t stay! I have to get home!” (line 36) – and challenges teachers faced in large part due to their “salary of misery,” as many described it.

A different kind of boycott was to ignore the change and continue their work with no permutations or modifications. Ignoring was a prominent communication tool in and out of classrooms. In PD, ignoring acted as a partial, silent boycott. All teachers concurred with the teacher who suggested, “Let’s finish this way,” (line 33), and they continued copying until they reached points 9, 10 or 11 in Murillo’s plan. Teachers then protected the work they had completed by ratcheting up their group copying: every school finished the number of hand-written copies needed for each teacher, pre-school educator and nucleus facilitators.

A final response was to comply or appear to comply. The shift towards compliance in the vignette occurred when two teachers finished copying their plans and began to develop a list “the man” (lines 2, 4, 5) ordered. “It might not be his *chorriada*,” one had commented, “but he has to accept it” (p. 311, top paragraph). Here the teachers demonstrated compliance while maintaining control of the situation. They respected the work they had completed (their

“Live Pretty” plans) while agreeing to comply – sparingly and begrudgingly – with the whims of “the man.” They also knew they could not leave without providing some sort of list, as Rosibel had admonished when reminding them, “You need to leave a clean copy with me before you leave!” (p. 310, third paragraph).

The MINED’s focus on uniformity and compliance within short timelines even as they constantly changed and overturned what teachers had already produced in compliance with previous orientations was a source of teacher frustration, and yet teachers usually complied with uniform precision. “We start to do one thing then they orient to something else. It makes one think we’re not doing anything” (lines 19-20). It contributed to varying levels of motivation regarding whether to comply and how. The MINED placed teacher motivation completely in each teacher’s hands and took no responsibility for the effects of its institutional actions on teacher motivation. Liria, who usually complied with MINED orientations quickly, told me she began to drag in 2013 after “Live Pretty” when the MINED told teachers they had to re-do their Annual Organizational Plan (POA) a third time in four months^{lxxvii} (the second time had been during “Live Pretty”).

Being an expert copier helped withstand MINED contrarianism. Teachers became expert copiers from their years as students, copying increasingly greater amounts of text each year Monday through Friday hours each day for eleven years followed by two to three years of teacher preparation. Copying was how most teachers learned; it was also how they explained how their students learned. Ambrosia explained that through writing (copying, transcribing and taking dictation) “one learns to write words correctly” and improve handwriting.

It’s that sometimes one has difficulty in the dictionary. Or when one is reading, I told them [my students] one is noticing the words, how they are written, and that is how one goes learning; little by little but one is learning. And if the handwriting, I tell them, it is important because what if we write and we don’t understand what we write? No one is going to understand us.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ Que a veces uno tiene dificultades, entonces, en el diccionario. O ya cuando uno va leyendo, les decía yo, uno va fijando en las palabras, cómo se escriben, y así uno va aprendiendo; poco a poco pero uno va aprendiendo. Y si la caligrafía, les digo yo a ellos, es importante porque ¿si escribimos y no nos entendemos que es lo que escribimos? Nadie nos va a entender.

Regalia concurred that “Reading and writing is very important to learn, and transcribing texts is good because children improve their handwriting and spelling.” She explained how she used copying in her class.

With [my students], I put them to transcribe readings and I tell them, ‘Just like it is in the reading, that’s how you are going to copy the words for me. You are not going to change them on me.’ Because there are children that, that are they are transcribing the reading and they put another, another letter and they change it, they write it badly, so, no. ‘You all are going to notice how it is there.’ Because when I was little I was like that. I transcribed a lot of readings and that’s how I learned my spelling and handwriting. That’s how I learned a lot, copying readings, because I take note of the words, how they are spelled, how they are in the text. So, that helps the children a lot, right, to read, to write and the handwriting and spelling. That helps a lot.²⁴⁸

They honed their copying skills each month when they copied the curricular program in monthly installments during each TEPCE. They then copied the monthly plan into daily installments with text they copied from MINED textbooks into their daily lesson plans, which they copied the next day onto the classroom board to have students copy it into their notebooks and on the board again for exams. This waterfall of copying that comprised most of a teacher’s time required neat handwriting, good spelling and some basic grammar knowledge. This teaching (copying) routine – required and supervised by MINED officials – contrasted with MINED discourse that denounced “traditional” and “memoristic” copying and dictation and praised “constructivism.” The discourse covered up the MINED’s main PD method with its teachers: copying. Teachers spent most monthly PD (TEPCEs) copying MINED texts (required) or each other’s reports (to meet the same-day deadline) as per MINED guidelines and requirements. All other MINED-designed PD required extensive copying of final written products with a uniform cover page and presentation. Teachers made blank tables in record time, ready to fill in with required information. Everyone created and decorated cover letters quickly. A few were particularly adept at writing introductory paragraphs to each report in which they incorporated government slogans like “Christian,

²⁴⁸ La lectura y escritura es muy importante aprenderla. Y transcribir la lectura es bueno también porque los niños mejoran su letra, la ortografía y la caligrafía. Yo por lo menos los míos, los pongo a transcribir lecturas y les digo a ellos, ‘Así como está la lectura, así me van a copiar las palabras. No me las van a cambiar.’ Porque hay niños que, que están, están transcribiendo la lectura y ponen otra, otra letra y la cambian, la escriben mal, entonces, no. ‘Ustedes se van a fijar a como está allí.’ Porque cuando yo estaba pequeña yo así era. Yo transcribía bastante lectura y así aprendí mi ortografía y mi caligrafía. Así aprendí bastante, copiando lecturas, porque yo me fijo en las palabras, de cómo se escriben, como están en el texto. Entonces, eso ayuda bastante a los niños, verdad, a la lect-, a la escritura y la caligrafía y la ortografía. Eso ayuda bastante.

Socialist, Solidarity” and the “Government of National Reconciliation and Unity” several times “to make Murillo happy,” a teacher said, laughing.

This institutional emphasis on copying and written product presentation or appearance carried into elementary and high school classrooms. All elementary teachers repeatedly reinforced neat handwriting daily and taught punctuation and spelling (and accent rules or grammar) each week. Elementary students needed to perfect this knowledge and skills to be successful in high school, where all content in all classes was dictated to students by students each day (there were no high school textbooks). Though elementary students in all grades filled a handful of notebooks each year, 7th to 11th grade students filled over a dozen notebooks each year. In 1st – 11th grades, a student’s notebooks were her or his textbooks; they had the information s/he needed to study and learn. This was one reason why people associated schooling with writing, which everyone also called copying (the terms were interchangeable).

Though teachers were expert copiers, the constant changes in orientations made even their copy-strong hands grow tired. They divided up copying among themselves and when extra work was required they often let frustrations bubble to the surface. But only in specific environments: PD, school assembly with all students present, and their classrooms. In PD, multigrade teachers shared concerns with their MINED coordinator, Profe Fausto, but not with the other nucleus facilitators. They knew Fausto better, and he knew them; he was a multigrade teacher who lived in San Jose and knew their multigrade reality. Most frequently, though, they shared concerns and frustrations with each other – with their closest colleagues and in their small PD group. Group members helped each other arrive at possible compliance solutions and they often complied by doing required work collaboratively (as described above). All teachers spoke frequently of a major incentive to comply: to avoid trouble with the MINED that could threaten their job. The harshest punishment was a write-up (i.e., black mark) in their municipal file though many spoke of fearing public humiliation, too.

It was made all the more difficult by Ortega’s insistence on contrarian governance whose principal characteristic was constant change as a norm. Vijil (2010) described this part of each teacher’s local reality from a national perspective. Ortega’s policy, she wrote, was no policy at all, but rather “a continuous process of ruptures” (n.p.) in which “the only continuity that exists in Nicaragua are ruptures” and constant policy changes. Contrarianism

at the national level flowed into teachers' daily lives and affected their behaviors in their schools, classrooms and PD - something Vijil described as well when she critiqued the dizzying changes in education policy and programs that "have not allowed us to learn, correct and advance. Nothing functions if every certain period of time one has to start from zero"²⁴⁹ (Vijil, 2014). Governance via contrarianism provided the government flexibility while unintentionally sabotaging its expectations and efforts to achieve uniformity in beliefs, knowledge and actions. It directly contributed to wide variation in how teachers implemented their carefully uniform plans and the MINED's uniform verbal orientations regarding teacher actions (proceduralized implementation). In the following section, I examine how the MINED contributed this variation in implementation by both transmitting gaps in knowledge and skills while it systematically ignored them as irrelevant.

Teacher Experiences of MINED Transmission of Knowledge and Knowledge Gaps

Teachers experienced a steady flow of verbal orientations about values education activities because there were few written curricular materials. Through written and verbal waterfalls, GRUN and Sandinista leaders transmitted information rapidly to the entire population while sending more specific orientations for teachers to coordinate values actions in every school each month. If a teacher did not know about the life of a Sandinista hero to be commemorated, s/he only had to listen to the national commemoration by Murillo, Ortega and other top officials before commemorating the hero locally at the school. When Murillo added existing school programs like the Integrated School Nutrition Program (PINE) to "Live Pretty" and values education, most teachers continued implementing those programs as they always had. Rather than giving teachers new curriculum for existing programs, officials expected teachers to adopt the new government discourse officials provided in monthly orientations and plans.

Almost the entire values curriculum was verbal because it was a work in progress, a curriculum that followed constantly adapted and changing national programs and campaigns. While national MINED officials focused on overseeing the Sandinista vision of structural transformation and societal change through the education system, they embedded their own knowledge gaps about teaching and learning and applying mandates in school and

²⁴⁹ Porque estas continuas rupturas no nos han permitido aprender, corregir y avanzar. Nada funciona si cada cierto tiempo se tiene que partir de cero.

classrooms into their program and campaign designs. Since national MINED officials approached their task as if all teachers had the same base of knowledge and skills, and assumed all teachers were well prepared to teach everything mandated of them, they did not think about knowledge gaps, their effects, or contrasting beliefs systems. That was not relevant to the task at hand. Officials either ignored the knowledge gaps they themselves promoted, insisted they did not exist, or discredited any negative effects they could cause.

Teachers were ordered to copy instructions about values actions their nucleus facilitators dictated to them each month – instructions the facilitators received 48 hours earlier from their state supervisors who in turn had received them from their national supervisors. Teachers then decided if and how to carry out the mandated values actions in their school or whether to leave implementation to their (Sandinista) principal, to local community leaders, or to ignore them altogether. If MINED officials required self-reporting about implementation, teachers were more likely to implement the values orientations in some way.

This section focuses on how teachers experienced national and local MINED officials transmitting knowledge and knowledge gaps in verbal instructions, material resource availability, and program or orientation content. The waterfall method transmitted knowledge gaps and reinforced them by not providing sufficient training to teacher trainers who passed knowledge gaps along to classroom teachers. In response, teachers relied on their colleagues and themselves, identifying, discussing and often resolving official knowledge gaps together. Despite MINED discourse to the contrary, teachers regularly expressed interest in learning how to confront and overcome knowledge gaps while they regularly talked about not having the resources or support (e.g., more knowledgeable others) to do so.

By assuming all teachers were completely prepared to teach anything, and by providing one-size-fits-all programs and orientations that did not fit every population or teacher, the MINED held teachers responsible for gaining the knowledge and skills they lacked. Officials cited teachers who were successful at implementing a particularly difficult aspect of a values program, or they led teachers in reflections about motivation and values being the key to all success – and unmotivated teachers being the bane of every student's existence. When teachers raised knowledge gaps directly to a pedagogic advisor or nucleus facilitator, they regularly responded with one of two phrases: "It's easy," or "Just copy it for

now.” I heard these two phrases in most TEPCEs, among colleagues, and from the Los Coquitos and El Roble principals to their colleagues. When teachers could not address gaps, they ignored them and copied the text they did not understand or knew they would not implement for different reasons (i.e., political differences – see next section on teacher beliefs). Below I look first at how local MINED officials transmitted knowledge and gaps in knowledge and skills from their superiors to classroom teachers. This tendency contributed to how teachers understood values orientations and how they decided to implement them.

Teacher Experiences: Local MINED Officials Transmitted Knowledge Gaps

One major source of teachers’ gaps in knowledge and skills in values education came from Municipal MINED officials from whom they received orientations: Municipal pedagogic advisors and nucleus facilitators. To a lesser degree, school principals played a role when they repeated Sandinista discourse in place of tackling specific teaching and learning challenges teachers raised. In this section I examine three of the most common contributors to classroom teacher gaps that stemmed from local MINED officials following orders from their superiors: verbal instructions, material resource availability, and values content.

Instructions. After checking attendance and leading teachers in singing the national anthem, Profe Rosibel announced the purpose of the day’s session: “Today we are going to re-write the 2013 annual plan.”^{lxxviii} At Rosibel’s announcement, teachers groaned and complained from all sides of the basketball court. Rosibel looked around blinking rapidly and sputtered briefly as she amended her announcement: “No, I mean we’re going to add to it.” Few teachers sounded or looked convinced. Several exclaimed to colleagues close by:

“I didn’t bring my POA,²⁵⁰ did you?”

“No, they didn’t tell us to bring it. Did you know?”

“No, no one said anything.”

Some rolled their eyes, grabbed their phones, talked quietly with each other, shook their heads. A few complained loudly.

“This is too much!”

“They’re always changing things – just to change, just to transform.”

“Transform, restore rights! Transform!”

“They don’t know what they’re doing!”

²⁵⁰ Plan Organizacional Anual (POA) or Annual Organizational Plan

MINED orders to re-do work with minor revisions or major changes was as routine as the monthly announcements of values and last-minute reports due the same day (see previous section). A teacher yelled out to Rosibel:

“We just did our February-March monthly program plan last Friday and now you’re going to tell us we have to do it again, too?”

“Why didn’t you tell us yesterday?”

“Or last Friday?”

“They always change orientations at the last minute!”

Questions and comments reverberated around the court. Rosibel pressed on, reminding teachers of a common goal: “We want to get out of here by 1pm, right?”

Many instructions created confusion. Some were confusingly redacted, having too little information for teachers to understand. In other situations, though, when facilitators gave teachers instructions many were talking among themselves, writing a report, or beginning to copy a plan. They did not hear or pay attention to the instructions given. In PD and the elementary classroom, instructions were mostly verbal and brief. No matter what caused confusion, teachers were often unclear about what to do.

During the transition from the large group to small groups in the “Live Pretty” training, teachers asked facilitators several times what they were supposed to do. Facilitators provided very similar answers. At one point when Profe Rosibel walked into the room, she told teachers, “Work by school, not in large groups,” and walked out. This did not address the question and teachers continued to talk about their personal lives and challenges. The fourth time a teacher asked, “What are we supposed to do?” Fausto told them: “The [national] plan is supposed to be adapted to each school.”

By repeating the same instructions and not being able to clarify them using different words, phrasings or examples, facilitators contributed to teachers extending transitions 20 to 60 minutes, talking at their desks. No one moved to “work by school” in smaller groups and no one began to “adapt the plan” to their school situation. Each time a facilitator entered the room, teachers asked, “What are we supposed to do?” Each time, the facilitator (one of four) responded with similar phrasing: “Adapt the plan to your school,” “Work in small groups by school.” Similar interactions repeated in elementary classrooms each day. Teachers played the role of PD facilitators and young students talked and played while insisting they did not understand what they were to do. Sometimes a student did not have a pencil or pen, or the

one she had did not have a point or did not write. Rather than ask someone for a sharpener (or knife), students did not begin their school work. Teachers wrote assignments on the board with very brief (a verb, a phrase) or no written instructions. Sometimes, they provided instructions verbally before or after writing on the board while most students were talking and playing. In neither teaching-learning context did the facilitator/teacher ensure everyone was ready and listening; it was not their responsibility but rather that of the learner. The San Jose nucleus took place on the basketball court with no blackboard so all instructions were verbal.

Even when elementary students (and teachers in PD) understood instructions, they often took advantage of the lull in teacher (and facilitator) attention to postpone their work. In the elementary school classrooms, when teachers finished writing exercises on the board for one grade, with a verb or phrase as the instruction, they immediately transitioned to the next grade's assignment. When they finished the marathon copying of text onto the blackboard for all grades, they often left the room. PD facilitators did the same. They dictated instructions to the large group of 50+ teachers present and then walked up the three levels of stairs and disappeared into the high school office. They left teachers to form their own groups and decide how to begin.

Teachers were also left to translate MINED discourse in instructions. Teachers did not confuse the facilitator's instructions to "adapt" Murillo's plan to local conditions or use their "autonomy" to make content relevant (MINED, 2009). These words and phrases were standard discourse that often contradicted MINED policies, orientations and supervisorial focus. No one during the "Live Pretty" training adapted Murillo's plan (see previous section). On the contrary, all eleven plans looked and sounded alike, even though their school communities and teachers were quite different. Teachers followed the instructions as they understood them: they converted Murillo's national plan into eleven uniform plans they would implement locally. Implementation would be the local adaptation, not the plan teachers presented to their MINED superiors.

Material resources. Murillo provided the first set of written curricular materials for values education with her "Live Pretty" Guide, methodology and other documents teachers had to buy during the week-long training. Each "Live Pretty" document cost between 16 and 22 córdobas, the cost of between two and three pounds of beans teachers would no longer

provide for their families that month – for each document they bought. No teacher bought all four documents because none could afford them, and yet all were helpful resources for teachers to implement Murillo’s new requirements in values education. The MINED rarely ensured resource availability, and yet officials acted on the assumption that all teachers had access to all materials it produced – even when everyone knew the MINED often printed 2000 copies – for 11,600 schools and 55,000 teachers. Teachers in PD and multigrade classrooms, and students at all levels, resolved a chronic shortage of material resources each day – this regularly affected if and how they participated in assignments and hindered learning.

Lack of access to PD materials produced gaps in teacher learning and knowledge. At the end of her instructions, Profe Rosibel announced she had ten copies of Murillo’s master plan. Each school needed a master plan to produce the required product for that day. The nucleus had multigrade teachers from 12 schools. That week officials had authorized two teachers from outside the nucleus to participate because they lived close to the high school – and Rosibel confirmed this agreement. Teachers immediately protested to Rosibel. Insufficient materials impeded their ability to comply. “Someone told me yesterday there were only 10 nucleus members, not 12! One of you!”²⁵¹ Rosibel groused, pointing out at the group and shaking her head. She made no mention of how she did not know how many schools were in her own nucleus, or how she had authorized the two other teachers to attend and yet had not remembered to get them copies. Teachers asked what they were going to do without enough copies. Rosibel ignored the questions and focused on the document.

Each one of these has, let’s see [she lifts the stack to the last page], has 32 pages. So each school has to give 16 córdobas before they receive the document. Everyone has to pay, because we had to pay. Oh, and those of you who requested the document yesterday (Murillo’s Methodology of “Live Pretty” implementation) and paid for it [in advance], Profe Gera has your copy.²⁵²

As the poorest paid in Latin America, and within Nicaragua, most teachers did not travel with extra cash. They had what they needed for bus fare and little to nothing more. The fact that the MINED did not ensure the necessary materials combined with the surprise

²⁵¹ Alguien me dijo ayer que habian solo diez centros [escolares miembros], ¡no doce!

²⁵² Cada uno de estos, a ver, tiene 32 páginas. Entonces, cada centro [escolar] tiene que dar 16 córdobas antes de recibir el document. Todos y todas tienen que pagar por que nosotras tuvimos que pagar. Oh, y los que pidieron el documento de ayer y pagaron ayer por él, Profe Gera tiene su copia.

announcement that they had to pay 16 córdobas for today's document caused another flurry of conversations during which Rosibel left the room. Some teachers had paid 20 córdobas yesterday to get a copy that morning of the methodology document from yesterday's session. "If I had known," one grumbled to her colleague, "I never would have bought that one."²⁵³

A group of teachers began to plan how to resolve the document crisis.^{lxxx} They counted the 14 schools present, identified the two teachers from schools outside the nucleus, and calculated the cost to send a family member into town to get copies that morning. They would never bring the documents back in time, so teachers decided which were prepared to pay the 20 córdobas and how they would break into groups to share the ten documents available. The resolution of sharing one copy of the main document among many teachers contributed to teachers developing one uniform plan copied multiple times. The facilitators ignored these conversations and left the teachers to search for a resolution to the issue they inadvertently created by not counting the number of member schools correctly.^{lxxxi}

Once the teachers arrived at a solution, Profe Rosibel continued the workshop as if everyone had access to all the materials needed. In PD and the elementary classroom, facilitators and teachers continued a lesson as planned as if all resources were available despite everyone knowing learners did not have access to them or were not paying attention. In each context, instructors informed superiors during evaluations that they did their part. Student behaviors interfered with one's teaching. Ambrosia explained the importance of "control[ling] discipline."

Because even though one prepares and all, the children don't let it happen, so sometimes we have that difficulty. That happens to me. Sometimes I do the plan... And when I arrive to class, it's difficult that they understand me well. Why? The same, what's it called? Indiscipline, indiscipline in the classroom.²⁵⁴

In PD, facilitators had to replicate the training on the designated day during a reduced time period. In the classroom, teacher facilitated lessons as planned on the designated day "in case a pedagogic advisor visits," several teachers explained. In those visits, MINED officials

²⁵³ Si hubiera sabido, nunca hubiera comprado ese otro.

²⁵⁴ Entonces primero es, verdad, auto-prepararse. Luego, está el dominio del grupo y a veces es muy difícil, con los niños que están en el aula. Para que ellos a la vez ellos vayan asimilando para el día de la evaluación ellos van a salir bien, y así a evaluar al maestro, verdad. Porque aunque uno se prepara y todo, verdad y los niños no lo deja, entonces a veces tenemos, allí está la dificultad. Eso pasa a mí. A veces me pongo a hacer el plan, busco en un libro, en otro libro, y desarrollo el plan. A la hora de llegar a la clase, difícil, difícilmente para que ellos me comprendan bien. ¿Por qué? Por lo mismo de la, la, ¿cómo se llama? La indisciplina, indisciplina en el aula.

“checked the registers...attendance, plans and from there nothing else. That was the entire visit and they left...They didn’t give any pedagogic assistance. None. Nothing. They were only concerned with the attendance notebook and if I had the [monthly and daily lesson] plans, nothing else.”²⁵⁵ Every teacher’s description of these visits was very similar. A teacher had to be following her daily lesson plan exactly as planned in her notebook, as planned in the monthly TEPCE (more on relationships among beliefs, knowledge and practice in planning in a separate article); the focus was on teacher compliance with MINED orders with no attention to student learning. With these well understood roles and responsibilities in the teaching-learning process, access to scarce material resources was a detail motivated teachers and learners resolved on their own.

Content knowledge. If teacher trainers did not understand content in their replication plan, they either skipped it or read the information aloud from written materials provided by the MINED. In both cases, they moved to the next point in the replication plan with no time for questions. They often left the room or basketball court where PD was held, and I often wondered if their absence was due in part to avoiding questions. The GRUN’s penchant for simplifying information and presenting it in small, repetitive pieces – particularly government slogans and other repetitive phrasing – left room for confusion, multiple interpretations and outright misunderstandings. The tendency to not leave time for questions or not be available for questions – or to answer questions by repeating the same phrasing repeatedly – highlighted the goal to transmit information quickly and efficiently.

Gaps in content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (i.e., how to teach content) was not just a phenomenon in (unmotivated) classroom teachers at the bottom tier of the waterfall as MINED officials often asserted. Gaps in content knowledge were prevalent among teacher trainers at every level of the waterfall – though teachers were the only people who recognized these and usually in semi-private or private spaces. Profe Pelucita denounced the 24 *diplomado* sessions as “informal...practically a reproduction. Why? Because the

²⁵⁵ Me revisaron los cuadernos de registros...de asistencia, los planes y allí nada más. Eso fue toda la visita y después se fueron. No hablaron nada de asesoría pedagógica Nada. Nada. Se preocuparon solamente por si tenía la asistencia y si tenía los planes, nada más (Ambrosia).

teachers who go to those trainings are not prepared for [the content] in the diplomado.”²⁵⁶

She explained.

They go on a scale, a ladder...those that come to train us, the classroom teachers, no [they are not trained]. How will I prepare myself or how am I going to master a subject that I received yesterday and I impart today? No, it doesn't follow logic. And it's even worse those that give from the second level to the third level, not even close. So, practically it is a reproduction of content, nothing more.”²⁵⁷

During TEPCE planning, Fausto repeatedly complained to the multigrade teachers about how difficult it was for him as a teacher trainer to receive *diplomado* trainings every Thursday or Friday and immediately replicate them the following Friday or Saturday (within 24 hours). “We have no time to even talk to each other,” he complained to our group in a TEPCE. “And I am supposed to be teaching my students the same as if I was there all five days a week!” He also admitted he did not learn well from the MINED's teacher training method – which he replicated in each *diplomado* training he facilitated.

I get bored just listening, listening, listening, listening, because there are times when I fall asleep. And anyone would do that, because I am not accustomed to that kind of learning. Listening to a [radio] conference I fall asleep...if it is not known to me, and they are talking to me in terms I don't know...if they come to me to talk about public policy, just telling me what the document says, that doesn't convince me at all...Let's not even talk about the kids.”²⁵⁸

Fausto then compared this common MINED training method to the elementary classroom. Elementary students, he argued, suffered in classrooms just as he did during trainings. Their teachers too often read information from the board or a textbook that used vocabulary and concepts the students did not know.

²⁵⁶ Los que vienen a capacitarnos a los maestros, no. ¿Cómo voy a prepararme yo o como voy a tener dominio de un tema yo en algo que, que recibí ayer y lo voy a impartir hoy?

²⁵⁷ Esos como van en escala, mire... los que vienen a capacitarnos a los maestros, no. ¿Cómo voy a prepararme yo o como voy a tener dominio de un tema yo en algo que, que recibí ayer y lo voy a impartir hoy? No, no tiene lógica. Y mucho peor los que van a, los que dan de segundo nivel y que dan a tercer nivel, nada que ver. Entonces, prácticamente es una reproducción de contenido, nada más.

²⁵⁸ Yo me aburro, perdón, yo me aburro estar solo oyendo, oyendo, oyendo, oyendo, porque hay ratitos que yo me duermo. Y cualquiera lo haría, porque no estoy acostumbrado a ese tipo de aprendizaje. Yo estar oyendo la conferencia me duermo... si es desconocida para mí, y que me están hablando en términos desconocidos... si me llega a hablar de, de, de políticas públicas, solamente diciéndome lo que me dice el documento, en nada me está convenciendo... Ahora no digamos con los chavalos, como son.

We read the book and are saying the same that the book says. I am not even convinced about what it says there [in the textbook]...the teacher reads only what he is going to give (i.e., teach). But he is not nor has he ever been a reader.²⁵⁹

Fausto finished his analysis of PD, trainers and teachers in the elementary classroom by citing a common belief about teaching, teachers, learning and learners: “When you are not a self-learner you are lost.” Ambrosia called it “self-learning,” while Pelucita called it “self-didactic.”

Ideations around self-learning for teachers and learners complemented shared beliefs that the learner was responsible for her or his own learning. The emphasis on self-learning through transmission and reception of information justified the official lack of attention to knowledge gaps; learners (teachers in PD and students in classrooms) resolved those gaps once they received the necessary information. These beliefs informed MINED decisions to not allow space or time for PD trainers along the waterfall to self-learn. As teacher trainers, facilitators fulfilled their primary role of messenger, transmitting information from superiors and collecting information from those below. This limited teacher trainers’ knowledge and ability to facilitate PD. Officials expected trainers to follow pre-designed replication plans just as classroom teachers were expected to follow the National Basic Curriculum, exactly as it was written and as well as they could with their knowledge base.

If facilitators and teachers did not understand certain content, they had several options. The first was to transmit it exactly as it was written. If anyone had a question in this scenario, facilitators/teachers repeated the information as written (in a PD document or as it was copied onto the blackboard in the classroom). This occurred daily in both teaching-learning contexts. In PD, if teachers asked questions, facilitators often re-read written instructions or content from the PD document. If teachers asked the question again, facilitators often read the same passage again, often several times in a row. Classroom teachers read information from the board that they had copied from their daily lesson plan (that they had copied from the *malla* and a MINED textbook), and then repeated the reading up to a dozen times. This was their most common form of direct instruction. Profe Pridi took

²⁵⁹ Estamos de leer el libro y diciendo lo mismo que dice el libro. Ni yo estoy convencido de lo que dice allí ...Entonces, todas esas cositas, y es que el maestro lee más que todo lo que tal vez va a dar. Pero no es ni ha sido lo que es un lector.

repetition to an extreme: she repeated the same lesson several days in a row “to make sure they get it.”

A second option was to skip information one did not understand. Facilitators regularly skipped entire sections of the training replication plan. Classroom teachers skipped specific content listings and sections in each curricular unit frequently (and entire units infrequently) as well as monthly values, cross-curricular values pillars, and values education actions. Since the values curriculum was mostly verbal, teachers skipped actions the MINED did not supervise for which teachers had little knowledge or skills, or for which they did not agree. This occurred with commemorations of Sandinista heroes (“I don’t know anything about Fulano” or “I don’t have anything to say about him”) and values competitions regarding the environment and (mostly Sandinista) history.

Infrequently in PD facilitators admitted to teachers that they did not know. In those rare cases, facilitators advised teachers to copy the text if it was part of a required written product or skip it if it was not going to be supervised. The MINED provided no time to discuss a question or information transmitted to arrive at joint understandings. Transmission was more effective and each individual was responsible for being a “self-learner.” Teachers never admitted they did not know content because “the teacher is the authority,” Murella explained. “Teachers have to know everything.”²⁶⁰

Institutional and individual reliance on repetition of instructions and information as a form of explanation communicated several beliefs about teaching and learning. Success of information transmission did not rely on whether the transmitter or receiver understood the information or not. It was an efficient and effective method that ensured information reached a broad population of learners quickly. Receiving information provided the opportunity to learn. Copying information was an efficient way to receive it. Asking questions about content was usually an ineffective exercise and rarely done while questions usually revolved around logistics of copying information. These beliefs reinforced a focus on compliance with logistical aspects of MINED mandates, particularly the format and receipt of content and production of written texts (through copying mostly) that served as artifacts for supervision and proof of compliance. This focus ignored any need to understand content or meaning-making processes. It also excused purely logistical compliance or appearances of compliance

²⁶⁰ La Profesora es la autoridad. Los Profesores tenemos que saber todo.

since the priority was documentation for superiors. Additionally, everyone knew you could not implement what you wrote in a plan or report if you did not understand it – and that’s when teachers used colleagues, local community leaders and verbal MINED orientations.

How Profe Rosibel addressed teacher questions about the Norms column in the “Live Pretty” plans provided a small example of how facilitators passed gaps in their own knowledge to classroom teachers. When teachers asked “What do we include as a norm for each action?” Rosibel looked at the teacher and then the group with a blank stare. She walked over to where she had left her workshop replication document and began to read. “Let’s see what Oscar put on his plan,” she said, reading from the paper. “His plan was our example.”²⁶¹ She shook her head back and forth slowly, looked on the back side of the sheet of paper to see if she had notes there. She shook her head again. In her “Live Pretty” training with first-level trainers (Oscar) to her second level group, Oscar provided a 5-column table format with the headers for each column but no examples of content for each. He made scribbles in each column to indicate they were to fill in each column with text. Either the tier two facilitators did not write a plan during their training or they had not asked questions about norms. Rosibel had no answer for the teachers other than a vague, “you know, norms. Just put norms. It doesn’t say anything here.”²⁶² She passed Oscar’s “example” of the table to Liria.

Liria looked at it, putting the paper close to her face and slowly backing it away. She finally declared to the group that it said nothing. “He just put scribbles,” she said, dangling the paper in the air. One by one three other teachers asked to see it. They each tried to decipher what he wrote. “How stupid! He just wrote scribbles!”²⁶³ Liria turned to the Los Jocotes pre-school teacher next to her and in a steely voice said, “Copy!” She pointed with her index finger down at Marjini’s notebook. “That way we won’t kill ourselves with this,” she hissed. “Copy!” she repeated, raising her voice. Marjini quickly repositioned herself to copy from one of the teachers to her left.

“If we don’t put something,” a teacher said to the group, “they’ll send it back and we’ll have to do it all over.”²⁶⁴ Several others concurred. They created norms together. For

²⁶¹ Vamos a ver que puso Oscar en su plan. Su plan era nuestro ejemplo.

²⁶² Ya sabes, normas. Solo pongan normas. No dice nada aquí.

²⁶³ ¡Que tonterías! ¡Sólo escribió garabatos!

²⁶⁴ Si no ponemos algo, van a mandarlo de regreso y tendremos que hacerlo de nuevo.

the diagnostic, they wrote, “They should attend assemblies convoked by the teachers.”²⁶⁵ For other points, they developed the following norms:

- 1 “Be constantly involved in the participation of the activities programmed by the
- 2 community and school”
- 3 “Use trash recipients correctly”
- 4 “Protect and conserve plants”
- 5 “Comply with personal hygiene norms to avoid illnesses”
- 6 “Comply with established norms”²⁶⁶

Every plan in the group had the same norms for each action.

National MINED Transmitted Knowledge Gaps

National MINED officials were first and foremost Sandinista cadre. They were an elite group of hand-picked Sandinista leaders who churned out one-size-fits-all policy and program mandates and curricular materials that aligned with national Sandinista objectives and plans. Those few who were educators had not been in the classroom for many years. Their positions were political appointments “of trust” to design all education policy, programs, curricular materials and orientations (and procedures) aligned with Sandinista objectives. Though these often coincided with educational objectives, the leap was often enormous. National leaders regularly assumed, for example, that teachers – like revolutionary cadre – would do whatever it took to implement mandates, even orders they felt fell outside their purview, that they did not immediately understand, or that they did not have the resources to implement.

Another common assumption and message was that teachers had the knowledge and skills they needed to comply with MINED mandates. This segued with another institutional belief that variations in knowledge and skills did not affect uniform implementation in all 11,600 schools around the country. The assumption was that if teachers did not have knowledge in that moment, they could work with others – colleagues and local leaders – to comply. Pedagogic advisors and PD facilitators regularly told teachers at the beginning of each PD, “you all know this.” When the MINED announced or reported on PD success, it reported that teachers “updated” “strengthened” and “reinforced” their knowledge (MINED INFORMA articles). This belief among MINED and NGO officials^{lxxxii} that teachers had all

²⁶⁵ Deberán asistir a la Asamblea a través de los docentes.

²⁶⁶ Incidir constantemente en la participación de las actividades programadas por la comunidad y el centro escolar. Usar recipientes correctamente para depositar la basura. Proteger y conservar las plantas. Cumplir con las normas de higiene personal para evitar enfermedades. Cumplir con las normas establecidas.

the knowledge and skills they needed fit with several corresponding beliefs: first, that information transmission was sufficient to update, strengthen or reinforce what teachers already knew; second, that teachers learned everything they needed in teacher preparation; and third, that anyone could teach with the right motivation – because motivation made anything possible.

Some teachers dismissed the MINED's public praise of teachers as propaganda for consumption by the general public. It was self-praise that "makes them shine, as if they're doing their part."²⁶⁷ This was a common sentiment teachers shared privately, denouncing "propaganda" as "a strategy to blame teachers"²⁶⁸ for the education crisis of low student performance and promotion rates with high grade repetition and drop-out rates. Privately, officials chastised teachers for not doing enough, that too many students were failing Spanish language arts and math in all grades, drop-out rates were too high, and universal enrollment remained stubbornly out of reach. Teachers were not doing enough.

Teachers were wholly responsible for transmitting all academic and values education information to students and families, for their learning. Variation in each teacher's knowledge contributed to variations in their implementation. Teachers identified and addressed gaps in their understanding according to the nature of the gaps, their interest in filling them, and the socio-professional contexts in which a gap(s) negatively affected them. One omnipresent factor all teachers spoke of regularly was MINED supervision. If a Pedagogic Advisor or school principal evaluated a teacher's work and there was a possibility that curricular adaptations or ignoring an orientation could cause problems (i.e., black mark in file, public humiliation in front of her peers), teachers were very likely to comply, at least minimally or through appearances to avoid losing their job.

I analyze two examples below that demonstrate how MINED officials used their knowledge and Sandinista commitment to normalize gaps, responsibilities to address them, and how teachers resolved knowledge gaps they identified in different ways in values education. In some cases, like the diagnostic study Murillo ordered under "Live Pretty," teachers resolved their knowledge gaps together. In other cases, teachers could not resolve their knowledge gaps through self-learning and motivation alone, which contributed to wide

²⁶⁷ Que les hace brillar, así como ellos estuvieran haciendo su parte.

²⁶⁸ Una estrategia para poner la culpa en los profesores

variation in how teachers understood values programs and actions as well as how to implement them. This occurred in the Integrated Nutrition Education Program (PINE), community actions like disaster prevention and preventative health, and in how teachers integrated values in academic content instruction via the MINED's cross-curricular pillars.

The diagnostic study. The MINED transmitted a knowledge gap with the first point of Murillo's "Live Pretty" plan: a diagnostic study. As teachers copied the action, "Do a diagnostic study" from Murillo's plan, they shared trepidations about it. Dino and Gera included a more specific action to add to Murillo's action: a community assembly, which confused some teachers in the group. "It says do a diagnostic study," a teacher read aloud. "You can't do a diagnostic," Dino explained, "without meeting with the entire community first." Gera added, "An assembly is the best way."²⁶⁹ The other teachers remained unconvinced. They decided to ask a facilitator but all facilitators had left the room. The teachers waited. When Rosibel popped her head into the room, Liria yelled out, "Can we start with an assembly instead of the diagnostic?"²⁷⁰ Rosibel paused and looked at the group. "It's up to you," she told the teachers, shrugging. "You have to account for the conditions in the community."²⁷¹ She had said this several times when presenting what the teachers were to do that day. Repeating this phrase almost a dozen times underscored Rosibel's understanding that it was important to the MINED; while also highlighting that she had no information to add.

Teachers and MINED officials had different understandings of what a diagnostic study was, who participated, what it could achieve, and how one should plan, organize and implement it. The national plan simply directed teachers to do "a diagnostic study" in the following two weeks. The lack of teacher knowledge regarding what exactly it was did not concern facilitators or national officials. When Rosibel repeatedly told teachers that the diagnostic study was a way to account for the conditions of the community, she did not define what conditions specifically, despite teacher questions.

MINED understandings. The MINED publicized a diagnostic study of the Nicaraguan education system done by officials in December 2012 and again affirmed by a

²⁶⁹ Dice hacer un estudio diagnóstico. No puedes hacer un diagnóstico sin reunirse primero con toda la comunidad.

²⁷⁰ ¿Podemos empezar con una Asamblea en vez del diagnóstico?

²⁷¹ Es según ustedes. Tienen que tomar en cuenta las condiciones en la comunidad.

Cuban delegation in March 2013. It published dozens of articles each week for several months in which officials called the diagnostic “a study,” “a series of meetings,” “a census,” and unspecified “actions.” The articles described “enrichment visits” comprised of seven two-hour regional forums led by the Minister and two Vice-Ministers with 350 to 450 “pedagogic advisors, school nucleus directors and municipal and state delegates who presented in a dynamic way the principal challenges faced daily in the classroom”²⁷² (MINED INFORMA, March 7, 2013) – “with the purpose of doing a diagnostic of the education situation in [each] region” (MINED INFORMA, March 5, 2013). No classroom teachers were invited. Sandinista Youth leaders participated. Members of the Cuban delegation, according to MINED articles, pronounced to the Sandinista leaders that “the problems are known in detail, there is a lot of information, but sometimes a second look can help uncover small details that will contribute to the development of a better education”²⁷³ (MINED INFORMA, March 7, 2013).

MINED articles quoted participants hailing the diagnostic meetings as an effort to “elevate quality education to higher levels...visualize deep changes in relation to school enrollment and infrastructure...increase and improve the quality of teaching through a new education model” (MINED INFORMA, March 5, 2013). Top MINED leaders presented the results of the Cuban diagnostic a month later in the same cavernous auditoriums with hundreds of participants sitting in rows facing a raised honors table with the Minister, Vice Ministers and other guests of honor. MINED officials praised these “direct encounters with [classroom] teachers” (MINED INFORMA, April 12, 2015) without mentioning that rank-and-file classroom teachers did not participate. They explained that the Cubans “validated” (MINED INFORMA, March 20, 2013) the MINED diagnostic done in December with “proof... being the [Cuban] suggestion to deepen in perfecting the quality of educational services” provided. “The diagnostic” was the series of meetings with the Cuban delegation followed the next month by a second series of meetings in which top leaders presented results, heard brief feedback, and obtained “consensus of the actions presented in the report...moment that [the Vice-Minister] took advantage of to make a call to those present to

²⁷² ...asesores pedagógicos, directores de Núcleos Educativos y delegados departamentales y municipales, quienes expusieron de manera dinámica los principales desafíos que enfrentan a diario en las aulas de clases.

²⁷³ “...los problemas se conocen al detalle, hay mucha información, pero a veces una segunda mirada puede ayudar a encontrar pequeños detalles que contribuirán al desarrollo de una mejor educación”, (sic) explicó García.

appropriate the programs the government was implementing in search of quality education” (MINED INFORMA, April 8, 2013).

Profe Adriana characterized the Cuban diagnostic during that month’s TEPCE as done by “foreigners” who “don’t know our country well” but who “came to offer us help, to see what they could find, and they provided recommendations, a lot of recommendations.” To her, the diagnostic involved a study over several weeks to provide recommendations regarding how to strengthen the education system.

Teacher understandings. Most teachers were aware of some parts of these competing understandings and definitions. They had to create a working definition for their “Live Pretty” plan right then, or copy the action and decide how to implement it within the next two weeks in their respective communities. The teachers also had personal experiences in their communities where Sandinista organizers and local Town Halls (mayor’s offices) led diagnostic studies. Dino and Gera understood a diagnostic as done in a community assembly to determine conditions and needs, in line with how Sandinista Municipal governments did diagnostics. “Yes, [we start with an Assembly] because that way we get from the community what they feel are the conditions and needs in the community and the school.” Dino and Gera were leaders in PD (Gera had been a teacher trainer), their school communities and the communities where each lived. Many relied on their experience and wisdom. Liria provided another understanding from Sandinista experiences: it was “something about opportunities, weaknesses and all that.” Other teachers said they did not know what a diagnostic study was^{lxxxiii} (“no idea”) or they shrugged their shoulders and shook their heads as they copied Murillo’s action word for word.

The teacher’s confusion the day of the training was about what “Do a diagnostic study” meant in the context of “Live Pretty” and how teachers should translate it into an action. What did the MINED want them to do? After a very brief conversation among themselves – and unanswered questions to several facilitators – teachers chose not to write what the point meant. “Let’s just copy it and we decide later. We’re losing time!” If MINED officials did not provide more verbal orientations the following week, “we may not have to implement the diagnostic or we decide with parents and community leaders.”

Liria deviated a bit. She wrote her first action would be to call a General Assembly with members from the Los Jocotes Cabinet of the Family, Community and Life (“What is it

called now?” she asked as she wrote this action, “they are always changing it!”²⁷⁴), the School Parent Committee, and the community in general “to educate them about ‘Live Pretty.’” Though her personal knowledge of a diagnostic was strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks, she adapted what she understood as the MINED’s version of a diagnostic with Dino’s and Gera’s action. All other teachers copied a close or exact rendition of Murillo’s first point and moved to number two.

Teacher practice. Teachers reported in the next TEPCE how they implemented their diagnostic. Most called a meeting – with parents and not the community – to present main points from their “Live Pretty” plan, similar to how the MINED had presented the diagnostic results and secured commitments to its already-defined actions. Like the MINED, they used the “diagnostic” action to *sensibilizar* people to community efforts around “Live Pretty,” assign responsibilities and “inform them [Municipal MINED] we did it,” teachers proclaimed in the TEPCE group. Liria held a parent meeting with one Cabinet member despite her plan committing to a much larger event with the entire Cabinet, all community residents and even municipal leaders from several government agencies. Mr. Martinez told the mothers that Murillo had changed the Cabinet names and structure. They were now the Cabinets of Family, Community and Life. She streamlined last year’s structure of 16 to 20 members to no more than six.

It’s now according to the community’s needs rather than representing multiple sectors of each community. We still work on all community projects, health, education, citizen security, sports and environment, and now there is no coordinator. We work as a team that receives orientations from the Municipal Commission. Like today, we have all received orientations about the ‘Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well’ Campaign and we support the school. The teacher can’t do everything, no. All families, teachers, cabinet members will work together.²⁷⁵

Liria then facilitated the rest of the meeting, reminding people present repeatedly that “now I will not do this alone.” She announced the diagnostic about the study, and then proceeded to inform them of the nine points on her Live Pretty plan. Her diagnostic meeting

²⁷⁴ ¿Cómo se llaman ahora? Siempre lo están cambiando.

²⁷⁵ Ahora es según las necesidades en la comunidad en vez de representar multiples sectores en cada comunidad. Todavía trabajamos en todos los proyectos comunitarias, salud, educación, seguridad ciudadana, deportes y el medioambiente, y ahora no hay un coordinador o líder. Trabajamos como equipo que recibe orientaciones de la Comisión Municipal. Cómo hoy, todos hemos recibido orientaciones sobre la Campaña Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien y apoyamos la escuelita. La Profesora no puede hacer todo, no. Todas las families, profesores, miembros del Gabinete, todos trabajaremos juntos.

mirrored the regional meetings the Ministers held when they shared the plan that came out of the Cuban diagnostic. With each point, she told them about their responsibilities and requested feedback, and then assignation of first and last name to each. One long point was the planting of the school yard, for which Liria proposed each family adopt a plant. They had to bring the plant and water it throughout the school year.

It is not so simple. When I brought the palm trees, and you all remember that I bought them with my own money and my contacts with the Mayor's office, several died over the Easter break because no one came to water them. The rest died at the end of the year. The mothers promised to water them, and no one did. Everyone comes here to get water from the well, each day, sometimes twice a day. And yet, no one thought to take a bucket of water to the plants! And then [the pedagogic advisors] say I am not doing my job! And I did my part! This time, each student has a plant, including preschoolers, and each family has to ensure that it survives the entire year. If it dies, you have to replace it, the same kind. We need variety, they want variety, including national symbols like *madroño* and *sacuanjoche*.²⁷⁶

When Liria talked about cleaning the school grounds, they put dates for the next "general school cleaning" so "all parents come to clean on April 1." She introduced working values by saying, "One cannot even scold a child because you can get denounced these days."²⁷⁷

Everyone approved bi-monthly values assemblies and "assume[d] the commitment to live values each day."²⁷⁸

Though all eleven teachers developed uniform plans in early February, each implemented the same "Live Pretty" actions – like "Do a diagnostic study" – differently. Variations depended on their knowledge and beliefs, those of their colleagues and the MINED, as well as those of people in their school community. Variations also occurred when teachers implemented uniform government programs due to changing combinations of knowledge, gaps in knowledge, and overlapping institutional, societal and individual beliefs about each values program and related action. Below, I look at how these combinations

²⁷⁶ No es tan sencilla. Cuando traje las palmeras, y todos ustedes recuerdan que las compré con mi propio dinero y mis contactos con la Alcaldía, algunas se murieron durante la vacación de Semana Santa porque nadie vino a regarlas. Las demás se murieron al fin de año. Las mamás prometieron regarlas pero nadie lo hizo. Todos vienen a sacar agua del pozo, cada día, a veces dos veces al día. Y aún, nadie pensaba llevar una valdada de agua para las plantas! Y después, ellos dicen que yo no estoy haciendo mi trabajo. Y yo hice mi parte. Esta vez, cada estudiante tiene una planta, incluso los de pre-escolar, y cada familia tiene que asegurar que sobreviva su planta durante todito el año. Si se muere, tienen que reemplazarla, la misma planta. Necesitamos variedad, ellos quieren variedad, incluso símbolos patrios como el *madroño* y el *sacuanjoche* (national tree).

²⁷⁷ Ni podemos regañar a un chigüin porque te pueden denunciar ahora.

²⁷⁸ Asumen el compromiso de vivir los valores cada día.

interacted as teachers implemented a pre-eminent values education program to restore the right of their students to not feel hunger.

The Integrated School Nutrition Program (PINE). PINE was part of the GRUN's national Sovereignty and Food Security policy whose goals were to change (improve) every Nicaraguan's dietary consumption, habits and nutrition in an effort to eradicate hunger. PINE sought to achieve these goals through four complementary components: a school meal,



Photo 10. Children eating the school meal, La Prensa.

school gardens, nutrition education, and an annual nutrition census. PINE was “implemented by the Good Government headed by *Comandante* Daniel Ortega Saavedra through the Ministry of Citizen Power for Education (MINED)” with a collateral schooling objective: “increasing and strengthening rates of retention, promotion and food security education” (MINED INFORMA, December 20, 2013). In line with all GRUN programs, PINE included an organizational component: children and adolescents were “protagonists in the restitution of their rights thanks to the political willingness of the Sandinista Front that guarantees the school snack” (MINED INFORMA, February 27, 2014). It was embedded within the Shared Responsibility Model; teachers, parents and students had to work together to successfully implement it.

To enact the school meal, *Comandante* Ortega provided every school shipments of dried corn, beans and rice, oil, and powdered pinol (a corn drink) to every elementary school three times a year PINE included multiple strategies to improve food consumption, habits and nutrition (see photos 9 and 10). The school

school gardens, nutrition education, and an annual nutrition census.

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Photo 9. Eating the school meal, MINED INFORMA.

principal measured dried food for each classroom, teachers sent the dried food home each day with a different child, and mothers returned the food cooked the following day to be eaten by all students in every class. The GRUN applauded this part of PINE the most publicly as did teachers and parents. For many, the meal was PINE.

On paper, PINE was much more – and the school meal program required much more than the presence of dried food in each school to be successful. The GRUN's insistence on not providing administrative support to run the school meal seriously affected its implementation in many schools, as did its refusal to provide trainings and material resources to ensure hygienic food preparation and transportation. A seemingly unrelated gap in knowledge – regarding classroom management – led some teachers to use food, a critical need of the majority of multigrade students, as a tool to punish misbehavior. Gaps in knowledge and material resources affected teacher understandings and implementation of the other three components even further, as did the GRUN's public dissemination of trainings and manuals that most teachers did not receive. I look at the combination of these factors in the rest of this section.

Transmitting gaps in material resources. The GRUN transmitted gaps in material resources regarding virtually all of the PINE's component programs and gaps contributed to teacher variation in PINE implementation. Rather than admitting these gaps or even addressing them to achieve greater implementation, the GRUN congratulated individual schools that overcame challenges and implemented all components. GRUN propaganda did not mention that though it promised seeds for school gardens, it provided them to 17% of schools (none for San Jose school gardens). No school received a "kit" of agricultural tools from the MINED which hampered garden preparation and ongoing care Teachers had to innovate to make the gardens happen or not implement them at all. Fausto solicited seeds from a local seller in the Municipal capital. Reina and Pridi got seeds from family members. Liria let a family plant the garden as a corn plot for their personal consumption.

Similar gaps from the MINED were transmitted in relation to the national nutrition census which it designed to monitor nutrition indicators in elementary school children (a national census). More than one fifth to one quarter of children in rural areas were malnourished and severely malnourished (UNICEF). The GRUN worked with UNICEF to document expected improvements in this challenging reality through the PINE census.

Solidarity Sandinista Youth²⁷⁹ groups spread across the country to do the annual nutrition census but they could not reach all areas, including the San Jose nucleus where school principals were responsible for finding scales to weigh their students. Because the MINED could not provide the technology to weigh all children, classroom teachers either guessed or used unreliable antique scales. In this way, teachers complied with MINED orders but the data they provided was unreliable due to inaccuracy because adequate resources were unavailable.

These kinds of resource gaps affected teacher implementation of the school meal program. One example was teachers' challenges in making pinol, a corn drink provided to each school that teachers had to mix with water and sugar in a large container. The MINED did not provide the container, the utensil for mixing pinol or the running water to make it or wash the container for the next day's pinol; it provided no dish washing or cleaning chemicals of any kind. Most teachers did not make pinol. Los Jocotes was the only classroom with pinol each day because parents mixed it at home for the small group of students. In El Roble, Fausto suddenly oriented teachers one August day in Assembly to make pinol. They had not made it most of the school year. "I make it every day," Regalia told him from the back of the lines of students in front of him (I observed her classroom drinking pinol twice in two years). Ambrosia asked Regalia how she mixed sugar into it and Regalia said she gave it to the students with no sugar. She used the one classroom bucket she had brought from home that was multi-purpose: for cleaning the floor (putting the mop in the bucket), washing hands throughout the school day and, infrequently, making pinol.

Transmitting gaps in knowledge. Compounding these numerous resource gaps that negatively affected if and how teachers could implement MINED orientations, the GRUN also transmitted knowledge and skills gaps. Teachers and officials shared an understanding of PINE as principally the school meal program that increased caloric intake. Many teachers and parents questioned MINED assertions that it provided a balanced nutrition because it only offered rice and beans; parents who had the financial means added other contents, like onions, tomatoes or green peppers. Everyone agreed that the meal fulfilled a basic need (and right) of their students to not feel hunger. For many students, the school meal was the only full meal they received each day. By responding to this basic physiological need due to

²⁷⁹ Juventud Sandinista Solidaria

poverty, teachers also understood the school meal as a strategy to increase retention and pass rates. Students attended school to get the school meal, Regalia (and others) told me.

The school snack helps with school retention of the children because the children sometimes arrive without having had breakfast and that helps them maintain themselves during class hours. Because sometimes in their homes they don't have anything to eat. They say, 'I'm not going to school because I don't have anything to eat for breakfast. And I'm going to go to fall down at school.' So it helps them. And also because the parents they send them [to school] and they say, 'Go to school,' a parent says, 'because they'll give you something to eat there.' And they send them. It helps with retention.²⁸⁰

Some teachers echoed the GRUN's discourse: "We as teachers can...begin a change, restoring the right to live well, live pretty and live healthy, and inculcating from the school that our students have better food habits" (MINED INFORMA, September 23, 2013). Within this framework, a teacher's responsibility was to provide dried foodstuffs to children each day so their mothers could bring it cooked for the entire class the following day. The other PINE components (school garden, nutrition census, nutrition trainings) were separate, unrelated activities despite the MINED promoting them as a single, complementary program nestled within a broad policy embedded in the National Human Development Plan.

Some variation in teacher implementation of the school meal program depended on teacher knowledge gaps mostly in how to develop administrative systems to effectively and equitably manage food distribution to families. MINED orientations were uniform for all teachers:

Directly integrate fathers and mothers to participate from the organization of work groups, preparation of the food, protection of the food and hygiene with which the food should be processed, all under the direction of the teachers and the School Food Committees (CAE) that the parents form. (MINED INFORMA, March 11, 2014)

How to organize students and parents was never discussed. Implementation depended largely on each school principal. Reina, in Los Coquitos, complained regularly to parents and students that parents did not participate despite not having an administrative system that ensured fair and daily distribution. Teachers raised examples of families not bringing food

²⁸⁰ Con lo de la merienda escolar, también mantiene la retención escolar a los niños. Porque los niños a veces llegan sin desayunar y eso les ayuda bastante a que ellos se mantengan durante las horas clase. Porque a veces en su casa no tiene que comer. Dicen, 'No voy a ir a la escuela porque no tengo que desayunar. Y voy ir a caer a la escuela' Entonces eso le ayuda. Y también porque los padres de familia los manda y dice, 'Vaya a la escuela, dice, porque allí le van a dar de comer.' Y ellos los mandan. Ayuda también a la retención.

back. I observed this occurring once, with a generalized reaction from the teacher, Pridi. She scolded all students about all mothers after one 5th grade girl did not come to school with the cooked food because her mother fell ill. “How manipulative these mothers! As if they think they have to make the food so there is no food. How manipulative these mothers!”²⁸¹

While Reina had no distribution system and none of the Los Coquitos teachers made monthly lists of student/family participation in PINE, Fausto and Liria had systems in which they provided food to a small group of students from each classroom each day. They rotated students evenly each month to ensure no family had to prepare food more than any other. The school missed a meal only when the MINED could not provide dates for when schools would be closed due to last minute planning and changes.

The school principal’s plan and distribution was one part of the administrative puzzle. In El Roble, Regalia and Ambrosia differed in their PINE administrative knowledge and skills: Ambrosia had a system for her students to receive the food. Regalia did not. This created inconsistencies in food availability by classroom. Ambrosia’s class ate every day and Regalia’s suffered infrequent but somewhat regular absences of their school meal. No school had across classroom coordination which sometimes caused hardship for families who had several children in different grades or classrooms. Without this coordination, a family could be assigned to cook beans or rice for the entire school on the same day.

During one August assembly, Fausto dedicated his talk to the school meal. He pointed to students in Regalia’s classroom who refused to take home the corn and beans. Regalia piped up and added, “And Profe, even when they refuse to take the food, I put it in their bags and even then some of them take it out and leave it back on my table.”²⁸² Fausto changed tack. “You should not be putting the food in their bags,” he told her.

This is a responsibility. It is not something you choose to do or not to do. This is the mothers’ responsibility. No mother can decide she does not want to cook food. If the mama cannot cook the food, she has to buy the tortillas or pay someone to cook the rice or beans.²⁸³

²⁸¹ ¡Que frescas esta mamas! Como si creen que tienen que hacer la comida para que no haya comida. ¡Que frescas estas mamas!

²⁸² Y Profe, aun cuando rehusan llevar la comida, la pongo en sus mochilas y aun asi algunos la sacan y la dejan en la mesa.

²⁸³ No deberias poner los alimentos en sus mochilas. Esta es una responsabilidad. No es algo que eliges hacer o no hacer. Esta es la responsabilidad de las mamas. Ninguna mama puede decidir que no quiere cocinar la comida. Si una mama no puede, tiene que comprar las tortillas o pagar a otra persona para que cocine el arroz o los frijoles.

Profe Ambrosia piped up. “That’s what I do when it’s Fabricio’s turn,” she agreed (referring to her sixth grade son). “I buy the tortillas and pay someone to cook the rice.”²⁸⁴ Ambrosia demonstrated to her students and the school that she fulfilled her responsibility when it was her turn to do so.

Regalia went on a public attack. “Doris [a 4th grade student] the other day took the corn out of her knapsack where I had put it, and she refused to take it home.”²⁸⁵ Doris, standing in the girls’ 3rd/4th grade line, responded to Fausto (ignoring the other two teachers): “That is not true, Profe! I took food home just a few days before! It was not my turn!”²⁸⁶ Fausto turned his attention to Regalia. “That’s why I tell you, the Professors, you have to have a list, a plan, be well organized to avoid this problem.”²⁸⁷ Regalia refused to be dismissed easily and she attacked Doris again. “That’s not true, Doris, and you know it! Stop telling lies! You haven’t taken food in months.”²⁸⁸ Fausto ignored Regalia’s outburst. He reiterated that they needed to coordinate with families who had children in multiple classrooms (Doris’ family, led by her grandmother, had children in every classroom).

Ambrosia then confirmed that she had a list, was organized, and she told her students when they had to take food home. “But I don’t have any idea when a sister or brother in Regalia’s class is taking food. We don’t have that kind of coordination.”²⁸⁹ Fausto reiterated that they had to look at that. Fausto ended the conversation with the phrase, “If the homeland is small...” to which the students responded in unison, “One dreams it big” followed by a choral rendition of the Nicaraguan national anthem followed by the National Literacy Crusade anthem. The principal cut off the conversation and mandated that teachers develop an administrative system. He assumed his mandate was enough for teachers to put it into practice – despite the fact that Regalia had not had a system for seven years. This method transmitted gaps in knowledge by not ensuring teachers had the knowledge and skills to comply.

²⁸⁴ Eso es lo que hago yo cuando le toca a Fabricio. Yo compro las tortillas y pago a otra persona para que cocina el arroz.

²⁸⁵ Doris el otro día sacó el maíz de su mochila donde yo lo había puesto y ella rehusó llevarlo a casa.

²⁸⁶ No es cierto, Profe. Yo llevé alimentos algunos días anteriores. Ya no me tocaba.

²⁸⁷ Por eso les digo a las Profesoras, tienen que tener una lista, un plan, estar bien organizadas para evitar este problema.

²⁸⁸ Eso no es cierto, Doris, y tu sabes. Deja de mentir. No has llevado comida en meses y meses.

²⁸⁹ Pero yo no tengo idea cuando una hermana o un hermano en la clase de la Profe [Regalia] lleva comida. No tenemos ese tipo de coordinación.

In Los Coquitos, Reina made no scheduled time to give food to students from each grade. Her two colleagues did not remind her and none had a calendar or system denoting which students took which food home each day. The students did not eat one to three times each week on average because the principal did not deliver the food to them.^{lxxxiv} Reina complained that families complained that the food was of poor quality and students refused to eat it. Each day, though, the vast majority of kids ate the food and asked for seconds when food was available. The majority of Los Coquitos students relied on the school meal as their main food for the day.

Many teachers used food as punishment. The MINED did not train teachers in classroom management and both MINED officials and classroom teachers used a similar combination of methods: threats, public humiliation and peer pressure applied inconsistently. The school meal at Los Coquitos was highly inconsistent weekly and all three teachers used food-as-punishment in a coordinated school-wide fashion. Teachers punished students by not providing food to misbehaving students or families that did not provided the five córdobas for food transportation three times a year and for special MINED-ordered commemoration meals. This occurred in 2012 for school-wide celebrations of the Day of the Child. Teachers requested 5 córdobas to pay for enchiladas teachers wanted to make for the kids and soda. Teachers promised students an extended recess, lots of games, good food (“not just beans and rice”), and early dismissal.

For several weeks running up to the event, each of the three teachers kept a list of students who had paid and those who had not paid. Each Monday for several weeks out, the teachers would remind the students who had not paid by reading their names out loud, reminding them of the required payment, and telling them things like, “It’s not that much, it’s only 5 córdobas. Your parents can all afford it. How much do you each spend on popsicles each day? You can bring the 5 córdobas.”²⁹⁰ As the day approached, the accusations became more direct: “It’s not that much. We’re doing a huge amount of work for you all and if you don’t bring five córdobas it’s because you don’t want to bring it. Or your parents don’t want to give it to you,”²⁹¹ Regalia told her class.

²⁹⁰ No es tanto, es sólo 5 córdobas.

²⁹¹ No es tanto. Estamos haciendo un enorme labor para ustedes y si no traen las 5 córdobas es porque no quieren traerlas. O sus padres no quieren dársela.

In the week before the event, each teacher began each day by calling the class to attention and reading a list of student names. It was the kids who had not yet paid their five córdobas. Some wrote the names on the front board. Then, they began to threaten that the kids who did not pay would not get any food. “Even though it hurts me to say this to you,” Pridi one morning told her students, “but Profe Reina said that those who didn’t give the 5 córdobas are going to form a separate line, and they will not receive food. If they don’t pay, they don’t eat. They’ll just watch everyone else eat.”²⁹²

Teachers also punished students who they perceived as severely misbehaved by refusing food to some children who did not have a clean cup or plate. Teachers told students “You cannot have food,” “Where’s your plate?” “Where’s your cup?” or “You didn’t clean it! You didn’t take it out of your knapsack! You can’t have food today” if they got in line with a plate or cup loaned by a friend – and already used that day. Each teacher allowed some students to use borrowed plates and cups, and all the Los Coquitos teachers told one or more students each day to loan their cup or plate to a classmate, while denying food to another child the next breath.

The shared and almost exclusive school-meal-as-PINE emphasis reinforced gaps in knowledge and skills the GRUN transmitted and ignored about other PINE components, particularly school gardens and nutrition education. School gardens were “a pedagogical tool to promote a new food culture, the care of Mother Earth and the production of fruits and vegetables for family consumption”²⁹³ (MINED INFORMA, September 23, 2013). The MINED expected teachers to know how to create sustainable school gardens with unspecified and untaught pedagogical strategies that would simultaneously complement the school meal and educate students about nutrition – with no training. The MINED assumed that all urban and rural 5th and 6th grade teachers (usually principals) had sufficient knowledge of farming in general and sustainable agriculture in particular without MINED training. The MINED did not include school gardens and Occupational-Technical-Vocational (OTV) class in teacher preparation or PD. If teachers did not have this knowledge, they were responsible for being self-didactic and learning what they needed to learn to implement these

²⁹² Ah, y aunque me duele decirles, pero Profe Reina dijo que los que no dieron los cinco pesos van a hacer cola aparte, y no recibirán comida. Si no pagan, no comen. Solo van a ver a los otros comer.

²⁹³ Además existen unos 2 mil 700 huertos escolares, los que sirven como herramienta pedagógica para promover una nueva cultura alimentaria, del cuidado a la Madre Tierra y del cultivo de frutas y hortalizas para el consumo en las familias.

programs – in addition to finding the material resources the MINED did not provide to implement them.

Knowledge and material resources gaps combined. When combined, gaps in knowledge and resources contributed to wide variations in teacher practice. School gardens, for example, had a record low compliance with expected MINED outcomes (like providing food for the school meal from the school garden) due to this combination. The MINED told the public that through successful school gardens teachers introduced students “to sustainable agriculture methods for food and vegetables that they can consume in their own home and to complement a nutritional and healthy diet” (MINED INFORMA, December 20, 2013). The MINED made continuous and unsubstantiated claims publicly that adult family members of students, “thanks to the education received from their children, implement gardens in their home patios” (MINED INFORMA, December 20, 2013). I saw no evidence of this desired effect in the communities I visited. The MINED provided no national evidence or data. Instead of doing a systematic evaluation of school gardens, it assured the public of this ripple effect and constant success from the waterfall of learning. By publicizing these stories, the MINED placed full responsibility on teachers for program implementation and encouraged families to hold teachers responsible for implementing the gardens. When teachers referred to gaps in knowledge, skills and/or resources, MINED and families often disagreed; the problem was teacher motivation.

Another effect of the interfacing resource and knowledge gaps combined with MINED supervision exclusively on compliance logistics (you have a garden/you do not have a garden) was the quality of program implementation. El Roble and Los Coquitos planted school gardens but they were did not produce a harvest. They never complemented a day of a school meal and yet they fulfilled the minimal compliance standards – despite objectives to the contrary. In El Roble in 2013 a father accidentally sprayed the school garden with a pesticide that killed all the plants before they reached harvest. In Los Coquitos, Reina taught OTV while Pridi taught her 1st and 2nd graders. OTV class was mostly free time for older students to run around school grounds without teacher supervision. Fausto often stayed seated in his classroom while Reina dug in the earth or did some other work on a small plot. El Roble students hauled water from the well to water established bushes and trees and clean the latrines (without soap), and played on the far side of the school grounds far from their

classroom. Liria did not implement OTV class. In 2012 she taught 1st to 4th grades so it was not required. In 2013 when she expanded to include 5th and 6th grades, she ignored the OTV requirement. More than one fourth of her students attended 5th and 6th grades, but, she argued, “it is still [designated] a 1st-4th grade school. Plus they [pedagogic advisors] never visit here anyway.” Another day she told a student, “If they don’t give me seeds, how am I going to implement the program? I’m teaching six grades myself. That’s sufficient!”²⁹⁴

In this section, I described how MINED officials transmitted knowledge gaps to classroom teachers in verbal orientations, trainings decisions (i.e., omissions), material resources, public propaganda, and dismissal of official responsibility for the existence of gaps and how to address them. Officials left teachers to fill individual gaps by copying MINED information or using motivation to meet challenges. Below, I detail how the MINED mandated knowledge “appropriation” by teachers in a foundational component of its self-proclaimed “curricular transformation”: cross curricular pillars. I explain how the lack of institutional knowledge cascaded down the waterfall in truncated bursts of transmission through written documents which illuminated institutional gaps in knowledge while at the same time neglecting or evading them. How the MINED communicated about cross-curricular pillars to teachers and supervised their implementation directly influenced teacher knowledge, understandings and practice – a process whose nuances I describe below.

Cross-curricular pillars.²⁹⁵ School principals and some teachers spoke excitedly about two additions in the Sandinista curriculum: cross-curricular pillars, competencies and achievement indicators. Profe Adriana explained:

The curricular transformation is more a more integral transformation. It is integral. Integral because it doesn’t only refer to the pedagogical aspects but also to the formative part in values. It is a model in competencies where the boy, girl and young person is prepared for life. So, not only to give academic tools, the scientific-academic part, but also preparing them beyond that to have a vision, to set goals, to strengthen the values part, the emotional part, all of that.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Si no me dan semillas, ¿cómo voy a implementar el programa? Yo estoy enseñando seis grados solita. ¡Es suficiente!

²⁹⁵ Ejes transversales

²⁹⁶ La transformación curricular es más una transformación más integral, verdad. Es integral. Integral, integral porque no solamente se refiere al aspecto pedagógico sino la parte formativa en valores. Es un modelo en, en competencias, la parte de las competencias, donde prepara al niño, a la niña, al joven para la vida. O sea, no solo dar herramientas, las herramientas no solo en cuanto a la parte académica, la parte académica-científica, sino también preparando ir más allá para tenga visión, para que se traze metas, para que fortalezca la parte de los valores, la parte emocional, todo eso, verdad.

Multigrade teachers knew cross-curricular competencies that appeared in each unit of each content area for all six grades. They copied the competency in each monthly program plan and each daily lesson plan with several corresponding achievement indicators for each grade and content area. Teachers understood achievement indicators as “what we used to call objectives” (Ambrosia, September 2013) before Ortega. Teachers who did not publicly self-identify as Sandinistas characterized the indicators as “nothing new” and “the same as we’ve always done.” This stood in contrast to self-identified Sandinista educators who regularly characterized them as an exciting part of the Sandinista’s “curricular transformation” (common phrase). In contrast to the achievement indicators, cross-curricular pillars were a completely new concept.

Table 7

The Nine Cross-Curricular Pillars and a Brief Summary of Their 36 Components.

Pillar Name	Summary of Components
1. Development of Personality	Self-esteem, emotional intelligence (e.g., social abilities, self-regulation, motivation)
2. National and Cultural Identity	National and patriotic symbols; natural, historic and cultural patrimony; national history. To strengthen “collective consensus regarding national aspirations” as “fundamental to national unity and identity”
3. Sexuality and Prevention of HIV, STD and AIDS Education	Sexuality development; sexual and reproductive health; prevention of STDs, HIV & AIDS
4. Health and Food/Nutritional Security Education	Promotion of Health Care; Nutritional and Food Security; and Prevention of Psychoactive Substance Use
5. Human Rights Education	Culture of peace, peaceful coexistence, prevention of violence, citizenship formation, transportation safety
6. Sustainable Environment Education	Environmental education, promotion of clean and healthy environments, environmental rights, risk prevention and management, tourist culture
7. Gender Equity and Diversity Education	Gender, equity, equality, empowerment, diversity
8. Education in/by/for Work	Productivity, entrepreneurship, vocational orientation
9. Information and Communication Technologies	Information and Communication Technologies literacy, as a learning tool, as a work force tool

The MINED claimed that the nine pillars (see Table 7) emanated from and responded to complex societal needs. They helped contextualize schooling content as well as teaching and learning (2009). The *ejes* and related actions were geared to help schools integrate more effectively into their respective communities, specifically guiding teachers to form students “with moral and intellectual autonomy, capable of committing to themselves and others to

respond in a critical manner to the historic, social, environmental and cultural challenges of the society in which one is immersed” (MINED, 2009, p. 110). The pillars “stem from the reality of daily life and social problems...the dynamic element that fills the totality of the curriculum with life, that converts it in something practical and concrete” (p. 39).

They are themes that arise from the needs and interests of society, that due to their multi-disciplinary complexity are integrated and developed in different curricular [content] areas and disciplines and are constituted in foundations for pedagogic practice upon integrating the fields of being, knowing, doing, forgetting and living in community (*convivir*), through concepts, procedures, values and attitudes that orient teaching and learning.” (p. 39)

Through teacher implementation of the pillars, the MINED sought to “procure new styles of learning and teaching” (p. 1) that would help children, adolescents and adults develop five new ways of learning: learning to be, to know, to do, to live in community (*convivir*) and to work/create. Students and teachers would participate in the official, coordinated attack on anti-values, including “violence, scarce presence of ethics, discrimination and inequalities, consumerism and wastefulness or squandering in the face of world hunger, degradation of the environment, and life habits that threaten a healthy existence” (MINED 2009, p.109). The pillars integrated the many values, attitudes and behaviors necessary to transform Nicaragua into a “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” society.

Pillars, to the MINED, guided teachers and students of all ages to understand and practice values related to civic participation, democracy and human rights in which they would develop knowledge, skills and attitudes coherent with democracy in Nicaragua. By knowing and practicing their rights, demanding quality from government institutions, and otherwise actively participating in civic organizations, students of all ages would participate fully in individual and societal transformation, together. This participation was necessarily based on developing a spirit of altruism and solidarity with others in which one was expected to accept people of all backgrounds and conditions. Suggested actions included donating blood, knowing and respecting international human rights conventions, treaties, and the Constitution of Nicaragua. The MINED transmitted other actions verbally in monthly TEPCes to teachers, through Sandinista Youth organizations for students, and to local Cabinets, parent committees and other Sandinista organizations.

Transmitting gaps in material resources. Most teachers never saw the MINED's 46-page description of the pillars, its multiple lists of values, attitudes and behaviors that explained the pillars (2009, p. 109 – 155), along with 36 components, 220 purposes and 129 competencies. Most teachers never received the MINED's *Curricular Design of Multigrade Primary Education* (2009) that listed the nine cross-curricular pillars (p. 39 – 43) with brief explanations. Then-Minister of Education, Dr. Miguel De Castilla, invited readers in the document's introduction to "appropriate the content of this document that is the base to interpret and comprehend the National Elementary Curriculum, an authentically National proposal and built by Nicaraguans as a fundamental part of the Participatory Revolution of Nicaraguan Education" (MINED, 2009, n.p.). This mandate from the Minister created challenges for teachers to appropriate content they never saw.^{lxxxv}

Another challenge to teacher implementation was that some pillars required material resources the MINED did not provide. Material shortages or unavailability made some pillars like "Information and Communication Technologies" impossible to implement. This final (9th) pillar required the existence and use of technology no multigrade school in the San Jose region possessed and for which no multigrade teacher was trained. Most teachers had not learned to type. Almost none had sat in front of a computer or turned one on. The San Jose High School had an air conditioned computer lab parents from previous years had funded, but according to its administrators and teacher the lab was completely under-utilized. The computer teacher had raised serious challenges he faced^{lxxxvi} in a 2013 TEPCE meeting with a high-level Sandinista official. He requested more training to build upon what he had taught himself.

The MINED doesn't recognize computer teachers. We get no opportunities to improve our knowledge and skills at the university level. It is a high school degree and nothing more. My skills are not recognized because of that... Technology is becoming more and more important. And still, we [computer teachers] are all high school graduates and nothing more, because the MINED does not offer us any more training to be computer teachers. With technology gaining importance, the MINED should take computers and computer teachers more seriously.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ El MINED no reconoce a los Profesores de computo. No recibimos ningunas oportunidades de mejorar nuestros conocimientos y habilidades a nivel universitario. Es un titulo de bachiller y nada mas. Mis habilidades no estan reconocidos pore so...La tecnologia esta logrando mas y mas importancia y aun, nosotros todos somos bachilleres y nada mas porque el MINED no nos ofrece mas entrenamiento o desarrollo profesional para ser Profesores de computo. Con el aumento en importancia para la tecnologia, el MINED deberia tomar en cuenta y con mas seriedad las computadoras y los Profesores de computo.

Gaps in knowledge regarding technology went apparent at all levels of the waterfall. The MINED Municipal and State offices lacked computers with pedagogic advisors using pen and paper at their desks (no individual computers). They also “lost” information regularly and had teachers re-submit hand-written reports two and three times. This ninth cross-curricular pillar represented potential in the capital and a future vision that at the time was impossible under the current conditions in the rest of the country.

Transmitting gaps in knowledge. The MINED transmitted and reinforced gaps in teacher knowledge with pillars, purposes, components and competencies that used vocabulary and concepts the teachers did not know or understand. The very first pillar, “Development of Personality,” included components like self-esteem, emotional intelligence, self-regulation, character formation, and social abilities (included critical, logical and creative thinking to facilitate comprehension, developing listening abilities and self-control). While the MINED mandated teachers incorporate these “components” in everything they did in the classroom and school, they never trained them in what the concepts were or how to apply them in their practice. Teachers had never heard of emotional intelligence, self-regulation or the three intelligences listed. Most had never heard of any theories regarding motivation and learning. They did not have the background knowledge or skills necessary to implement this pillar, yet the MINED mandated they both know and implement them.

Another way the MINED contributed to gaps in teacher knowledge was through confusing redaction to explain the pillars. Official written explanations meandered with often overlapping and contradictory purposes, practices and programs. Documents read more as drafts than final documents. To frame the nine pillars, the MINED presented ten fundamental purposes. These included practicing human, ethic, environmental, moral and civic values; demonstrating moral, just and solidarity behaviors with everyone; practicing values such as responsibility, tolerance, honesty, and justice to contribute to a pluralistic society; developing a spirit of altruism; practicing rights in conventions and treaties; knowing obligations and rights to demand quality from state institutions; and participating in citizen and democratic actions.^{lxxxvii} How teachers were to not only “appropriate” but also connect purposes with competencies in classroom instruction was unclear as were the role of the pillar’s numerous

components and purposes. Implementation emphasis remained on having the *ejes* physically present – e.g., hand-copied – into each monthly and daily lesson plan.

The MINED reinforced a shared understanding among teachers that copying the provided pillar in every monthly and daily lesson plan with little understanding of what it meant or how to implement it in the classroom was sufficient by not providing knowledge or access to written knowledge combined with its supervision methods and focus. Pedagogic advisors supervised teacher implementation of cross-curricular pillars in the same way it supervised academic instruction: in verbal orientations during TEPCE sessions and pedagogic advisor review of teacher plans to check if *ejes* were hand-written into every monthly program and daily lesson plan. Each *eje* was usually no more than one sentence long. Teachers complied with MINED orientations with lesson plans for first graders in language arts on “Use capital letters with proper names” with the cross-curricular pillar competency “Living a positive way with a healthy sexuality that contributes to full and integral development” (MINED, 2011, p. 14) or a lesson plan for fourth graders to “recognize the characteristics of Planet Earth” with a cross-curricular competency to “practice a productive culture using Technologies (sic) that allow one to optimize resources and achieve proposed goals and objectives” (MINED, 2011, p. 63). Teachers included the MINED-provided cross-curricular pillar competency in every written plan. They never vocalized a pillar in class because “we only have to have them in the plan,” one told me. Regalia was the only teacher who insisted in her interview that she mentioned them in class each day, something I never heard her do in my visits.

Insistence by MINED officials that teachers include *ejes* in each teacher’s monthly and daily plans – in writing – produced strict compliance, and nothing more. If the MINED did not place value on helping teachers understand the *ejes* and how to use them, or what exactly they all were, the teachers would not spend the time on their own. They had plenty to do without this extra self-teaching/self-learning task. Ambrosia had highlighted how her job, to be “a teacher of quality” was about “self-preparing. It is important because one has to prepare oneself to develop the content...so it is about, right, self-preparation.”²⁹⁸ This was in

²⁹⁸ Una Profesora de calidad...es auto-formación. Es importante porque uno tiene que prepararse para desarrollar el contenido...entonces es sobre, verdad, la auto-formación.

line with the emphasis placed on individual learning and studying MINED-facilitated information outside of the classroom.

When the MINED mandated teacher actions with no concern for existing knowledge or understanding, they underscored an institutional belief in teaching and learning as an act of straight transmission from expert to learner with the learner immediately becoming the expert through self-learning. Standard practice of “facilitating,” “giving” or transmitting information to learners was represented in the language and methods used, and expectations of learners upon receiving information. Many if not all of the pillar’s components, purposes and competencies would contribute greatly to classroom, particularly in regard to learning, motivation and behavior management. Teachers regularly talked about wanting more support in these areas but felt they did not get it – from their teacher preparation, MINED PD or annual pedagogic accompaniment. When the GRUN responded that the *diplomado* was an example of Ortega listening to teacher requests, many responded with frustrations and anger. The *diplomado*, with its 8 sessions on GRUN policies and 8 on values (mostly related to the GRUN’s political project), did not respond to their pedagogical and behavior management needs in the classroom in any way. The ideas written into MINED documents that officials transmitted – physically and verbally – required more than mandates or poorly disseminated written documents; they required long-term training to ensure teachers understood them and learned how to implement them, a process that required paradigm shifts in institutional and teacher thinking and instruction.

With the steady focus on compliance with MINED orders, teachers did not worry about how to implement competencies that made no sense, that a teacher deemed inappropriate, or that they perceived as impossible to implement. No teacher worried about implementing a pillar the MINED did not supervise. Teachers copied pillar competencies in each plan word for word from the malla. Most teachers knew only the one to two sentence text of the cross-curricular pillar competencies that appeared in their malla. They had no idea that there were nine overarching pillars and that each had numerous components and purposes. They did not know all 129 competencies. The MINED unintentionally allowed for a widely varied understanding with uniform implementation (copying the text into each plan) by developing a complicated and redundant framework with no professional development or

accompaniment and no dissemination that ensured teachers even received the content about cross-curricular pillars.

Knowledge and material resources gaps combined. Several other challenges related to how the MINED framed competencies as one-size-fits-all for 1st through 11th graders, redacted some in a vague manner, and ignored how the pillars led themselves to project-based learning with no attention to knowledge and resources needed to design, implement or evaluate appropriate projects under the pillars. The eighth pillar, example, included a competency that read: “Apply your creative and innovative talent to being your own business, overcoming the obstacles that present themselves” (p. 154). This mandated every teacher to help every 1st-11th grade student to create a successful business and overcome all obstacles. This required business administration knowledge and resources that most teachers, students and families did not have available to them, and that the MINED did not provide even as an option. The one-size-fits-all competencies reflected the institutional belief that adaptation for younger or older children was unnecessary for their learning and that teachers could teach content the same way to all ages because they learned the same way. A very general competency in “Equity and Diversity in Education” read: “Resolve with decisiveness, autonomy and confidence the daily situations of family and school life.” The redaction left open to teachers to define this as they wished (or not at all). Its general nature provided little guidance to help teachers concretize it into teaching strategies across the entire curriculum.

To complicate teacher understandings further, the MINED encouraged project-based learning and cross-curricular content integration in discourse only. Planning and instructional policy consistently instituted ungrade and uncontent processes that required teachers to copy lesson content twice into two different notebooks before copying it onto the board for students to copy into their notebooks and study to then copy it one last time on a future exam. One grandmother scoffed, explaining that “today’s kids have it easy; they have notebooks.”

When I was in elementary school, we copied from the board onto hand-held blackboards. We copied what we could in that small space and then we erased it to copy the next section, and so on. That helped us learn it, memorize it, to be able to write it on the next day’s exam. We didn’t have notebooks!²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Los chavalos de hoy tienen la escuela fácil. Tienen cuadernos. Cuando yo asistí a básica, copiamos de la pizarra a unas pizarritas que agarramos en la mano. Copiamos lo que pudimos en ese espacio chiquitito y

The MINED provided no guidance in teacher preparation or PD in line with its project-based or content integration discourse and it never had historically. Helping students create a business could only be implemented across content disciplines and grades through a lengthy business development process for which the MINED did not provide the knowledge or resources, just the mandate.

The MINED filled in some of these knowledge gaps through verbal orientations of monthly actions it wanted all teachers to organize in their school communities on the same calendar. Teachers implemented some of the 129 pillar competencies by organizing MINED-ordered clean-up campaigns; environmental and anti-drug campaigns or marches; and cultural fairs. By waiting for these verbal government orientations, teachers did not have to learn extra content or plan beyond what the MINED ordered. This was one more way the MINED reinforced teacher compliance as copying the pillar competencies into their plans – and waiting for verbal orientations to implement.

The MINED's information transmission through the waterfall of learning involved minimal information in the form of values education mandates or "orientations" with insufficient material resources and/or knowledge to implement them successfully. The information officials provided was rarely sufficient to successfully implement human development programs like the PINE or new academic strategies like cross-curricular pillars. This was compounded by the MINED ignoring the effects of teachers having minimal to no material resources available. The MINED did not take into account the many knowledge and resource gaps present at all levels of the institution or how those gaps negatively affected teacher understandings and practice. Understanding values orientations and deciding on their practical applications were the responsibility of each classroom teacher. Teachers used their experiences and existing knowledge as well as resources available to them to negotiate MINED expectations and supervisory requirements, and to decide if, how and with whom to practice what aspects of values education in their schools.

This process reinforced existing gaps in MINED officials' and teachers' knowledge and understandings in values education. In PINE, teachers focused on the school meal program over its other components but still struggled with full implementation due to gaps in

después lo borramos para copiar la próxima sección, y así. Eso nos ayudó a aprenderlo, memorizarlo, y poder escribirlo el proximo día en el examen. ¡No tuvimos cuadernos!

administrative knowledge and using food as a classroom management tool. In relation to cross-curricular pillars, teachers focused on copying each corresponding pillar exactly as it appeared in their teacher program to show to a MINED official. Gaps in knowledge about values and values enactment were complicated further by a variety of competing beliefs systems: those imposed by the MINED and GRUN on its teachers and pedagogic advisors, as well as individual teachers' beliefs systems in relation to the GRUN, MINED orientations and values practice in schools. I look at several of the most prominent of knowledge-resources-beliefs interactions in the following section.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I described and analyzed teacher experiences at the bottom of the waterfall with a focus on the effects on teacher understandings and practice of the knowledge MINED officials transmitted along with important knowledge gaps. In their eagerness to develop programs that were accessible to everyone (one-size-fits-all), and their rush to maintain ongoing actions in every community, GRUN and MINED officials inundated their army of implementers on the ground with simplified information that was minimal and partial. The idea was that those who were motivated would fill in the gaps and make do, but teachers already had an enormous amount of tasks to complete on their plate and academic responsibilities in addition to their new values education ones. The knowledge gaps often reinforced the partial knowledge teachers had as sufficient, rather than helping them seek out additional information or skills to enact each values action. I showed how this occurred in “Live Pretty” planning, the Integrated School Nutrition Program, and cross-curricular pillars. Though each of these examples was a distinct aspect of values education, the effects of minimal knowledge and knowledge gaps was similar.

In the next chapter I continue to look at teacher experiences at the bottom of the waterfall, specifically how teachers used shared and institutional beliefs in combination with their own belief systems in four areas they cited: how to respond to anti-values in the classroom; how to teach students values in schools; Sandinista values and teacher understandings of these; and the role of political party identity and beliefs, and possible substitutes for teachers who did identify as Orteguistas or Sandinistas. Teachers cited a gaping disconnect between the GRUN's values education focus on having adult family members participate in GRUN projects and campaigns to learn values and enact them, and

the need for values and attention to anti-values in the classroom, with elementary student behaviors and classroom management. I analyze how though related, these two emphases remained completely distinct and even contrary from many teacher perspectives.

Chapter Nine

Teachers Negotiated Competing Beliefs Systems regarding Values and Schooling

Teacher experiences, understandings and practice at the bottom of the waterfall

Teachers cited four belief systems that played large roles in their decision-making regarding values and values education:

- 1) Classroom management as a response to anti-values behaviors
- 2) Values teaching and learning in an academic setting
- 3) Specific values content (i.e., gender equity, violence prevention, child rearing)
- 4) Political party identities and related beliefs (i.e., Sandinista values, *Orteguismo*)

I look at each of these from different teacher perspectives in overlapping and changing contexts. This analysis contributes a nuanced understanding to how teachers negotiated shared, institutional and individual beliefs about values and values education with their existing knowledge, knowledge gaps, material resources, and other external influences to make split-second and planned decisions on if and how to implement values education actions.

Values, Anti-Values and Values Teaching in the Academic Classroom

In teacher preparation and as 1st – 11th grade students, teachers learned specific beliefs, knowledge and practices regarding teaching and learning academic content (I report on this separately). Values education was not part of their schooling experiences or teacher preparation. It was a recent phenomenon in Ortega's professional development during which officials presented values with a narrow, well-defined definition: values were practiced when one participated in Sandinista government programs using official values-laden discourse.

Many teachers described values as being defined by the MINED. Murella explained how “values come from what they [facilitators] tell us each TEPCE, the values of the month.” Regalia described the same routine.

They [facilitators] give us the values, they tell us, ‘The values of the month,’ because month to month they give us values. And then, those values we give to the children...integrity is a value this month...another value they gave us this month is

cooperation, how they should cooperate and all that. Investment. Savings and rational use.³⁰⁰

Facilitators dictated the list of values, teachers wrote them into their plans, and no one discussed if or how to implement them with children. “All of that [the values] I talk with them a little, when I begin class. I already have it in the program [daily lesson plan],”³⁰¹ Regalia explained.

MINED officials also dictated commemorations³⁰² or other values activities teachers were to organize at their schools. Some were directly related with the month’s values, like homeland month including activities celebrating Independence Day and the Battle of San Jacinto (defeating U.S. slave owner and self-imposed President of Nicaragua). Others were unrelated, like International Women’s Day in March, Mother’s Day in May and Nicaraguan Teacher’s Day in June. Facilitators dictated the information. Teachers organized resources and planned actions to successfully implement the actions in their schools.

A final way the MINED dictated values education in urban schools mostly was through a pyramid of competitions beginning with the best student in each grade at one school competing against the best students of all other grades. The winner competed in a municipal level competition with all the best students from participating schools, and the winner of that competition headed to the state competition – until a national winner was crowned the best of the best. Teachers organized their most gifted students in environmental leagues and history tournaments as per MINED instructions.

Teachers understood values and anti-values in their classrooms distinctly from how MINED officials presented it. Their days were filled with anti-values behaviors of their students, and for most teachers values education should help students learn how to live values in the classroom with their teacher and classmates. Teachers tied values education almost exclusively to classroom management as the main priority and one for which they received no support. They relied on highly punitive management methods and daily advice talks, both of which they had experienced as students themselves. Infrequently, teachers

³⁰⁰ Ellos nos dan los valores, nos dicen ‘los valores del mes’. Porque mes a mes nos dan los valores. Entonces, esos valores les damos a los niños... La honradez es el valor de este mes... otro valor que ellos nos dieron este mes es la cooperación, como debería cooperar y todo eso. La inversión. Ahorro y el uso racional.

³⁰¹ Todo eso hablo un poquito con ellos al inicio de la clase. Ya lo tengo en el programa.

³⁰² Días feriados

taught values similarly to how they taught academic content – copying definitions on the board for students to copy and memorize, and represent on an exam.

When approaching the MINED's values education orientations that required they participate in GRUN project planning and organization, teachers used two main combinations of belief systems: political identities and beliefs about Ortega and his Sandinista government, and the institutional messaging regarding compliance. Teachers used a combination of these beliefs systems with others to understand and decide if and how to implement values education actions.

Combatting Anti-Values in the Classroom: Behavior Management as a Values Priority

Teachers most often raised behavior management challenges when they talked about values in the classroom. They highlighted the daily barrage of student “insolence,” “disrespect,” “stubbornness” and “violence.” Different forms of aggression and violence predominated in all classrooms from relational aggression to escalating rough-housing and wrestling, physical aggression, and sexual harassment. Teachers repeatedly raised the need for help with classroom behaviors, and placed blame on the GRUN and MINED for prohibiting them from using corporal punishment in classrooms without providing for how to fill the vacuum. Though all GRUN officials linked values education to changing anti-values behaviors, MINED officials never addressed if or how teachers could use values education to address daily classroom behaviors. Liria expressed one frustration:

Their talk about values is always about participating in a project, in clean-up campaigns, or some commemoration or other action they organize. But what about the students and the anti-values they show in the classroom, to their classmates, to us? Nothing. Not a word. They say nothing about that.³⁰³

All teachers related classroom management with punitive punishments they were able to use in the past; under new treaties cloaked in values enactment, they felt lost and defensive, blamed for low student learning that they said stemmed more from families not teaching values to their children, and students not paying attention, not studying and not respecting the teacher or each other.

³⁰³ Su discurso sobre los valores siempre tiene que ver con la participación en un proyecto, una campaña de limpieza, o una conmemoración u otra acción que ellos organizan. Pero ¿qué sobre los estudiantes y los anti-valores que demuestran en el aula, a sus compañeros de clase, a nosotras? Nada. Ni una palabra. No dicen nada sobre eso.

Difficult student behaviors were not just momentary, fleeting or innocuous. They defined an enormous part of every school day and teacher energy, creating enormous stressors.

I come home some days and I can't do anything. I have to go lie down. (The teacher holds his 2-year old girl in his lap as we talk.) I cannot give my little girl a papa's love like I should (he looks down at her with a weak almost apologetic smile) because of how being in the classroom affects me. Sometimes I come home and I still have the noise and screaming and shouting of students in my head. It won't go away. (He puts both hands around his temples and pushes in on his head and gets a pained look on his face. I laugh and tell him I know what he's talking about even though I'm just visiting. It's deafening some days, I tell him. He looks at me, nods, and continues.) Sometimes I am asleep at night and I dream about the classroom. I wake up with a start and I have to calm myself down and tell myself that I am not there, I am home, and it's okay.

The MINED ignored this part of classroom environments. Research studies on them “in the Central American context...are few” because investigations focused on bigger phenomena like “citizen insecurity and, concretely, gangs” (Ortega, 2005, p. 787). Multigrade teachers were on their own to make sense of student misbehavior and how to tackle it. Below I describe student behaviors, before analyzing teacher understandings about these behaviors in their classrooms.

Student anti-values behaviors in multigrade classrooms. Student misbehaviors included student-on-student aggression, student-on-teacher aggression and teacher-on-student aggression. Many times the aggressions were related to one another and built over the school day. Outbreaks of misbehavior occurred before school, during transitions, at recess, during group work, and when teachers worked with one grade only, one-on-one with a student, or checked student work in their notebooks. I look at different types of behaviors in these changing contexts, as well as different kinds of interactions (e.g., student-student, student-teacher, student/family-school property).

Classroom and learning management methods together contributed to a lot of student misbehavior. Havoc during transitions was when many student misbehaviors occurred. In multigrade classrooms, because the MINED insisted that grades be separated rather than integrated, transitions were a constant throughout the day. Reina regularly reminded Pridi and Emilia to “separate the grades so when a pedagogic advisor walks in they know which grade is which.” Regalia always put third/first graders in front and fourth/second graders in

back, their desks back to back, each facing their own blackboard. Ambrosia always had first/third graders on the right side of the classroom facing forward and second/fourth graders on the left facing the same blackboard. Teachers provided each grade an assignment and then turned to another grade, or to checking student work, reminding students to be quiet and not interrupt the other grade(s). Many teachers told students, “I don’t want to hear another word out of you all in that part of the classroom. I am working with the [first] graders” (Reina, field notes). Students in each grade were meant to wait patiently at their desks, sitting quietly with no assignment while the teacher copied assignments on the board for each grade, one by one. Many children found this task impossible, particularly when they had to wait for 30 minutes or more.

Students were also meant to be self-didactic within their grade, to understand and complete each assignment immediately, no questions asked. They had little recourse if they did not understand an assignment. Teachers were unavailable for questions until they finished with each grade. When students did not understand an assignment and had no recourse, they often began to play, which sometimes led to fighting or other aggressions.

Many students arrived early to school and once teachers opened the gates to let students on school grounds, they were left to their own devices. One morning before school at El Roble student wrestling behind the school went very wrong. One of the smallest third grader boys was so severely beaten his swollen and knotty was barely recognizable and he had difficulty standing. Even though the beating had occurred on school grounds, no teacher took responsibility. Instead, Regalia sent the boy home immediately, retrieving his knapsack from the classroom and throwing it at him, yelling, “Go, go, go! Now!” Fausto and Ambrosia backed Reina. The next day, the enraged father demanded an investigation or he would take matters into his own hands outside of school. The teachers agreed that the latter was a better solution. They never determined who was responsible.

In group work, students often fought as well. They yelled at each other, grabbed each other’s work, ripping or crumpling it up. They scribbled across a student’s page (making them have to do their work again), pulled hair, stole or hid other students’ classroom supplies (and sometimes their entire notebooks). They kicked knapsacks and broke plastic cups or plates inside that a student had brought for the school meal. They punched, boxed (a Nicaraguan pastime), karate kicked, and more. Several boys were often on the floor

wrestling, their heads thumping against the hard cement tile floor frequently, creating either laughter, tears or a real fight. The expletives and insults careened around the room from first to sixth graders alike.

During recess, fights were common. One morning in Los Coquitos, a fight broke out between Jamie and Itzamara. Many students from all grades gathered around them in a circle, chanting, “Fight, fight, fight” as the two little second graders from Reina’s classroom slapped, punched, shoved, wrestled and pulled each other’s hair. I was writing at the board to prepare for social studies class when Alexa ran to the door and yelled, “Gringüita! Come!” Pridi looked up just as I did. She went marching over to the crowd ahead of me, walked through the ring of students, and pulled the two girls apart. Jamie’s hair was wildly unkempt, her breathing rapid, her face red. Itzamara adjusted her shirt and appeared to be fine. Pridi slapped each on the wrist without a word. She took Jamie’s hand, brought her back into the classroom where she patted down her hair and put it back in a ponytail once again.

Every day, teachers accused students of coming to school to play or fight, usually as a group of children played and fought, or refused to stop despite a teacher’s threats. Most days kids partook in and/or witnessed violence and hitting, karate kicking at heads and torsos, throwing pencils, poking at eyes, wrestling, choke holds, punching and shoving. Someone got hurt at least once a week, and several children cried each day. Sexual harassment was also prevalent. In Emilia’s classroom groups of boys held a girl to force kisses, “because she’s so pretty,” they said. In all schools, 3rd to 6th graders touched their classmates’ butts and breasts. When Jajaira told Regalia her uncle was touching her in a way she felt uncomfortable, Regalia told the girl to tell her uncle to stop. Two mothers lodged complaints of sexual assault in Regalia’s classroom which Regalia denied and declared absolutely impossible because “I am in my classroom all the time.”

Less aggressive student behaviors included using the permanent marker on the white board, throwing erasers or strategically dumping chalk dust on people’s clothes and in their hair, marking the teacher’s materials, making extreme noise by scraping metal desks across the tile floors, pounding on the metal doors, and shouting loudly often in unison. A group of first graders in Regalia’s class put their hands over their ears and shouted as loudly and shrilly as they could in unison, making it so I could not hear my own voice as I spoke.

Classrooms were full of motion, with at least a few students if not the entire class walking, running, hitting, shoving, moving. Aggressions often stemmed from accidents – a shove that was not meant to be so hard, or that pushed someone into someone else, or that pushed the entire desk-and-chair over with a child inside. Teachers complained about the constant name-calling among friends and classmates, though they rarely addressed it. When they did, it was during the morning's advice talk and not at each event. One teacher explained:

You mentioned that teachers pass the first 20 minutes scolding students, and it's true, and it's because they [students] are accustomed to behave in a certain way from the time they are little. You should hear some of the children talking like adults.³⁰⁴

Teachers shook their heads when they spoke of first graders arriving to school with vulgar insults, rude or humiliating nicknames for their classmates, and other verbal attacks.

Other relational aggression included excluding a student from a group. Students often excluded students a teacher had publicly humiliated, or students who were not a teacher's favorite. Each class had at least one student who was the least bathed or most unkempt, the quietest boy (who hung out with the girls or by himself and did not rough house or fight), or the child who did not attend class often. Students would often not allow these marginalized students to get a textbook, to share with them, or to work on an assignment together. Most classrooms had one or two students who did the work on their own if they did it all.

The lack of control in each classroom saw a changing group of students playing outside each day during class time. From inside the classroom they often remained unnoticeable, particularly when they kept far from the classroom, out of earshot. Other times, though, they made their presence known, yelling into a classroom from the open windows, throwing notes or objects at students through the windows, and shouting insults, making animal noises, making fun of someone in a class, or shouting invitations at some classmates to join them.

A favorite student prank to interrupt classroom teaching and learning was erasing written assignments from the blackboard, particularly while fellow students were still

³⁰⁴ Tú mencionaste que la maestra pasa los primeros 20 minutos reganando a los estudiantes y es cierto, y es porque ya están acostumbrados a comportarse de una cierta forma desde chiquito. Usted debería escuchar algunos de estos niños hablando como, como, como adultos.

copying the information. Students tried to erase a teacher's lesson with no one noticing, particularly the teacher. When students could not copy text into their notebooks (or did not want to or had finished), they roamed the classroom looking for something to do. This often involved recruiting others to leave the classroom to play outside or enter into a neighboring class to target one or more students there. It sometimes involved harassing classmates who were working. While Ambrosia and Regalia refused whiteboards, Reina had a whiteboard and little control of whiteboard pens. Several boys in particular had a penchant for finding permanent markers and using them liberally on the whiteboard. There was no alcohol or ready-made way to erase the permanent marker in her classroom. Blackboards provided endless entertainment with chalk dust, chalk turned into mini-missiles, and flying erasers filled with chalk dust.

Many teachers blamed MINED policy for verbal aggressions against them. A high school teacher commented how his principal, a staunch Sandinista, told all the 5th year students they “cannot fail in this school.” He explained what he understood by her policy that she justified as part of Murillo's automatic promotion policy.

It means that all have to graduate. Here, the high school students receive 1,000 córdobas when they graduate. So the principal told them, “You will not lose the bonus because there are no fifth year students who do not pass.” What happens, then? I had a student who said to me, and I say it with the exact words she used, “I don't give a f--- about your class because the principal said we can't fail in any class.” What can I say? What can I do? It takes the authority away from the teacher when they say those things.³⁰⁵

Many teachers used this same phrase, accusing different stakeholders of taking authority away from the teacher – and thus no longer being able to control student anti-values behaviors.

Student aggressions towards teachers were mostly verbal and relational. When students hit teachers, it was usually after a teacher hit them. Teachers and students engaged in yelling fights, some more than others. After repeatedly threatening a particularly challenging student over several weeks, Reina yelled out one day, “I'm going to talk with

³⁰⁵ Que los estudiantes de quinto año no pueden aplazarse en esta escuela...Significa que todos tienen que graduarse. Aquí, no sé si sabes, los bachilleres reciben mil córdobas cuando se gradúen. Entonces la directora les dijo, no van a perder el bono porque no existe estudiantes de quinto año aplazados. Que pasa entonces? Yo tenía una estudiante que me dijo, y digo exactamente las palabras que utilizó, ‘A mí me vale verga tu clase porque la directora dijo que no podemos aplazar en ninguna clase.’ ¿Qué puedo decir yo? ¿Qué puedo hacer? Quitla la autoridad del maestro cuando dicen esas cosas.

your papa!” The second grade immediately stood up and walked towards her, yelling, “I don’t have a papa!” Reina walked towards him, yelling, “Mr. Vasquez responds for you. Leave this classroom right now. Leave! And don’t come back until your grandfather comes with you. I don’t want to see you until I talk with your grandfather!”³⁰⁶ The child refused to leave but he did not return to school for more than two weeks.

Students also yelled at teachers about school work: assignments, not wanting to work in groups, and other frustrations. For over two months, boys at Los Coquitos in all grades emptied the ink cartridge from plastic pen casings to use them as spitball shooters. Spit-filled balls of paper stuck to the clothes, arms and legs of classmates and teachers alike, beginning before classes began and continuing until dismissal. Just as they did their classmates, some students called teachers vulgar names in the classroom. Regalia remembered in front of a school assembly how students treated her the previous year.

I had students last year tell me I was “f----- up from birth.”³⁰⁷ That’s what they said – three times. Three times they told me I was *mal parida*. Do you think that’s pleasant? Do I say anything back? No. I just have to take it.

I had students accuse me last year of giving out grades to the students I favored. Imagine that kind of accusation. That I give grades as a gift, that is terrible to say. And yet a teacher has to take it. A teacher has to put up with these insults and lies directed at their character.

Teachers felt they had no recourse. They had to ignore student behavior because they feared being denounced by family – and losing their jobs.

Many teachers blamed family members for the verbal aggressions against them.

Regalia talked about mothers being abusive verbally to her.

And then sometimes the students help set a trap so parents can trap the teacher. I had a mother come in last year and without saying anything in welcome just stepped in and started fighting with the students. She walked in without a hello and yelled at a student.

A teacher has to put up with all this, and the daily mistreatment by the students, moms, dads and grandparents. Being called names, being treated badly. I’ve had people say, ‘That teacher can’t control her students. That teacher doesn’t have the

³⁰⁶ El Señor Vásquez responde por vos. Salga ahora mismo. ¡Ya! ¡Salíte! Y no regresas hasta que traes a tu abuelo. No quiero verte hasta que hablo con tu abuelo.

³⁰⁷ The term was “*malparida*” which is a strong vulgar condemnation. An animal who is *malparida* is stillborn or aborted. It is equivalent in offensive to “son of a whore” and other strong vulgarities. A child saying this to an adult – a teacher or parent – is especially offensive.

respect of her students.’ And when the students are so disrespectful, when it’s the students who are so misbehaved and insolent. A teacher has to put up with it, without saying anything.

Teachers often felt attacked by all stakeholders around them, and their defensiveness emerged in School Assemblies, classroom talks and private PD small group conversations.

Feeling under attack was amplified by student and family aggression against school property and materials. In El Roble, people forced entry into the school twice within a short period of time and stole supplies. The second time, when I asked Fausto who he thought had done it, he immediately answered it had to be someone from the school. “It has to be. They knew the balls had changed from the library to the warehouse.” He had changed the balls after someone had stolen items from the library less than two months previous. “They spread the food all over the floor, too. The students cleaned that up first thing this morning. We didn’t lose it. They put it back in the sacks.”³⁰⁸ That day during recess, a first year high school student who had been Fausto’s student the year before and who was visiting the school overheard our conversation. He muttered something softly. Fausto became enraged, yelling and screaming at the boy, “That can take you to the police, boy. That is sufficient to throw you in jail!”³⁰⁹ The boy turned and walked away, dismissing Fausto with a gesture of his hand. Fausto continued yelling at his back, “Just those words, boy. Be careful, with just those expressions you can be sent to the police.”³¹⁰ I had never seen a student be disrespectful to Fausto’s face. Once Fausto had calmed down and the boy had left, I asked Fausto what the boy had said. “That they take it all. When we were talking about the robbery of the balls and equipment, he said, “They should have taken it all.’ Imagine!”³¹¹

All schools complained of petty theft. Reina argued that she could not keep books in her classroom or put anything on the walls because it served as a community meeting place as well. “I come in and people have taken things down that I put up, or books are gone. I can’t leave anything in here of any value or it’s gone. They don’t respect anything. They don’t even respect their children’s school!” Family’s held the school in high value as a

³⁰⁸ Lo regaron por todo el piso. Las estudiantes limpiaron eso primera cosa hoy por la mañana. No le perdimos. La pusieron de regreso en los sacos.

³⁰⁹ Eso te puede llevar con la policía, muchacho, ¡eso es suficiente para echarte en la cárcel!”

³¹⁰ Solo esas palabras, muchacho. Cuidado, con solo esas expresiones te puede llevar la policía.”

³¹¹ Que lleven todo. Cuando estábamos hablando del robo de los balones y pelotas, él dijo, ‘Que lleven todo.’ ¡Imagínese!

meeting place. In El Roble, a mother explained what they looked for in a teacher when Fausto retired.

We need a teacher who gets along with the community, who communicates, that from the beginning there is trust, right? Like the trust that Professor Fausto has given us since the beginning. He is active in everything, and he helps us in everything. If I say, “Profe, I need a letter, write me one,” he will write any letter we need. “Just sign it,” he tells us.³¹²

Liria also wrote letters and helped Los Jocotes secure different projects for the school and community. Reina did not foment those relationships in Los Coquitos.

In the middle of the 2013 school year, a person began to relieve themselves on the school’s front steps every Sunday evening or Monday morning. At first, they left excrement in one pile, easy to clean. Since Fausto was the first to arrive and unlock the gate, he was the main candidate for clean-up. Each time, he waited until older students arrived and put them on the task, hauling water in buckets from the well and cleaning with the school’s brooms. In a final act, the offender spread excrement all over the fence and entryway. The school’s treasurer described that morning during an interview.

I was there, my dad was there, Ernesto was there, various parents, and we waited for the police to arrive, and they were taking prints also...., the boss of the sector said that this was under investigation... it is a grave crime because there are kids studying there. We signed, the Profe did an act, and it’s under investigation and they haven’t clarified anything here...but they haven’t returned to do it again, thank God. I would say that that is a person without scruples or maybe a drunk, or some lazy person whose idle. They don’t have any conscience about what they do because it violates the rights of the children. It is a horrible act..., there is no pardon, I would say. Because I went [to the school] and came home with my stomach upset. And the children, too. ‘Ay,’ Yolet said. ‘I don’t want to go to school anymore.’ After seeing that disgusting thing. I couldn’t help clean, but the professors and some parents cleaned, and by the following day it was normal. She [Yolet] went to class.³¹³

³¹² Entonces queremos un maestro o maestro, alguien que se lleve con la comunidad, que haiga comunicación, que desde que inicie de confianza, ¿verdad? , como la confianza que el Profesor Fausto nos ha dado desde el inicio. Activo, en todo nos ayuda. Si yo digo, ‘Profe, yo necesito una carta, hágame...’ (pause) Y él ya lo hace cualquier carta que necesitemos, ‘Solo firmenla.’

³¹³ Estuve yo, estuvo mi papa, estuvo Ernesto, estuvimos varios padres de familia y esperamos que llegara la policía, y allí estuvieron tomando huellas también..., eso dijo el jefe del sector, que está en esa investigación... es un delito grave porque allí están... usted sabe que allí son niños que estudian allí. allí nosotros, pues, firmamos, el Profe hizo un acta, y eso está en investigación y no ha aclarado nada aquí, no ha andado... No, no, no han vuelto a hacerlo después, mas nada, gracias a Dios. Yo diría que eso es más personas sin escrúpulos. Personas tal vez, digo yo, o seria algún bolo, o alguno que anda en vagancia. No tiene consciencia de lo que hace porque es de violar los derechos de los niños. Es una zanganada..., no tiene perdón, diría yo. Porque yo fui, hasta que me vine con el estómago revuelto. Y los niños también. ‘Ay,’ me decía Yolet. ‘Ya no quiero ir a

The community decided to hire a night watchperson “to take care and watch over the school,”³¹⁴ despite the costs it incurred.

Teacher understandings of anti-values behaviors in classrooms. Many teachers explained student behaviors as rooted in Nicaragua’s crisis of anti-values. Profe Regalia expressed the frustration many felt: “That treaty, that Rights of the Child, that isn’t Nicaraguan. And now we can’t lift a finger against a child. If we even look at them wrong they denounce us!” Nicaragua signed the U.N. Convention on Children’s Rights in 1990. UNICEF invested heavily in disseminating information about the rights of children, they were a priority in the GRUN’s National Human Development Plan, and they appeared regularly in the MINED’s National Basic Curriculum for all grades. Parents and teachers cited the Convention as being responsible for adults no longer being able to control student behavior – at school and in the home. Teachers often said parents could use corporal punishment in the privacy of their home and “if they cannot control them, how can we?”³¹⁵ Pelucita exclaimed one day after several students sent a fifth grader home (to Los Jocotes) with a bloody shirt and bruises on his face.

Teachers also blamed student misbehavior and low academic performance on perceived learning disabilities. All teachers labeled several of their students as having learning disabilities, having no idea how to help them learn, and admitted that none were diagnosed because families would have to travel to Managua to get their children tested. Even then, once in Managua, no one guaranteed the MINED would attend to them in one visit. Rural families did not have the resources to make the trip. Others “just can’t learn,” teachers pronounced.

B can’t learn his colors. What can I do with that? He won’t learn! He does not know his colors. Each day as we go through the colors, he doesn’t know when two things are the same color. He can’t learn his colors. What can I do with that? He won’t learn!

Reina (above) and all teachers spoke with exasperation about how they did their best, more than their best, and some students simply could not learn. Liria received an 8-year-old first

esa escuela.’ Después de ver esa cochina. El Profe, pues, yo no pude ayudarlo limpiar pero allá limpiaron ellos Profesores, algunos padres de familia, ya el siguiente día ya fue normal, ya fue a clase.

³¹⁴ Pero es mejor que haiga quien cuide y vigile allí en la escuela.

³¹⁵ Si ellos no pueden controlarlos, ¿cómo deberíamos poder controlarlos nosotros?

grader who had been labeled “learning disabled” in her previous school because she had not learned one letter or number in three years. Her family and teachers knew she needed glasses, but no one could afford them so her aunt in Los Jocotes bought her a pair of prescription glasses. Liria refused to enroll her because “she won’t learn, and then when I fail her I will be blamed, when it’s not my fault at all.” She had the little girl sit in the classroom each day listening to the second through sixth grade students around her.

When I have time, when I’m not explaining something to the other grades, then reviewing work from a second grader, next from a fifth grader, next from a third grader. You see me, I am dancing on a brick responding to all my students...so I sit down with her [the first grader] and give her a lesson in her notebook, but she needs a lot of attention, she needs me to sit with her without any distractions, and I don’t have time. She probably won’t learn, but I can try.³¹⁶

Teachers readily dismissed alternative behavior management strategies, like classroom rules. Rules and consequences did not work, teachers insisted; few used them and consequences were usually unenforced. Many student misbehaviors were related to minimal behavior and learning management skills. The vignette below shows how Reina attempted to use an alternative behavior management strategy and how her attempt backfired. This and other similar experiences confirmed her belief that talking and convincing students to change their behaviors was nowhere near as effective as punitive threats and punishments.

Reina walks to her desk at the front of the classroom and pulls out a sheet of paper. She walks to the back of the “U” of desks, and hands the paper to a tall third grade girl, yelling at the students talking around her.

“Saskia will write the name of each child who gets out of his or her chair. And I am going to give a writing assignment, ‘Do not MOLESTAR in the classroom.’ Five pages. Ay, it hurts here (she puts her fingers to her temples). Write down each boy and girl!”³¹⁷

Reina walks back to the first graders. Eliam immediately pops out of his chair. Saskia begins to write his name. He runs towards her and pulls the paper from under her pen, yelling at the top of his lungs, “Now, I am going to write down everyone.”

³¹⁶ Cuando tengo tiempo, cuando no estoy explicando algo a los otros grados, después revisando el trabajo de un chavalito de segundo, después de Quinto, después de tercero. Tú me ves, yo estoy bailando en un ladrillo todo el día respondiendo a todos los estudiantes en multigrado. El mismo multigrado puede ser de primero a sexto, y uno tiene multigrado en los grados. Por ejemplo en cuarto, serán de cuarto, pero yo tengo multigrado entre Lisbeth y Gerson con los otros [de cuarto]. Es multigrado en un solo grado – y tengo seis! Entonces, me siento con ella para darle una actividad en su cuaderno pero ella necesita bastante ayuda, necesita que este allí apoyándola sin distracción, y no tengo el tiempo. A lo mejor no aprenda mucho este año, pero puedo intentar.

³¹⁷ Saskia va a anotar el nombre de cada niño que se levanta de su silla. Y yo les voy a dar una tarea de escribir, ‘No molestar en el aula.’ Cinco páginas. Ay, me duele acá. Anota a cada chiguín y chiguína.

Reina fires back from where she is sitting with the first graders. “NO! Give the paper to Saskia.”

“NO! NOW I AM THE ONE, I AM THE ONE, AND NO ONE ELSE. LOOK! Look at this girl!”³¹⁸ As he yells out the word “girl,” Eliam karate kicks at Saskia’s head. She is sitting at her desk and does not move. His foot approaches millimeters from her head. Reina stands up and walks back over to the “U” of desks. She reaches over and tries to get the paper back from Eliam. He steps out of her reach and holds the paper even farther away from her in his extended hand. Then he starts to run and dance around the room.

“NO ONE MARKS MY NAME ON THIS PIECE OF PAPER! NO ONE! NO ONE! I’LL mark people’s names down, but nobody marks MY name.”

Reina tries to swipe the paper out of his hand a few times and then stops. “Give me the paper.”³¹⁹

Eliam raises the paper as if to give it to her and rips it into two pieces, then four, then eight. He throws the pieces into the air and lets them fall to the ground. Reina stops and looks at him, hands on her hips. Her chest is moving up and down with her heavy breathing. “Pick them up.”

Eliam runs over to where his buddy Junior is sitting at a desk. He karate kicks at Jr.’s head. These two are often attached at the hip, constantly rough-housing with each other. Jr. gets focused on an assignment when he wants to, which is not often, particularly when Eliam is around.

“I have a limit,” Reina warns. She walks into the “U” of desks and looks around. Eliam is in his chair, sitting at his desk as if nothing happened. The eight pieces of paper are on the floor. Reina looks around at walks to Mynor, and begins to yell at him for throwing trash on the floor. “Pick it up! You’ve done nothing today!”³²⁰ The rest of the students begin to work, talk and play with each other. “How many have finished?” Reina yells. “You have one more minute to finish. I don’t want to hear another word out of you all in that part of the classroom. I am working with the first graders. And this is the last time I warn you. Next time I write down names and talk with your parents.”³²¹

Reina had recently completed a MINED school counselor training. “They told us to ignore student behaviors and keep going with class” and try alternative strategies, like the one she

³¹⁸ Ahora yo voy a anotar a todos (Eliam). NO! Dale el papel a S. (Reina) ¡NO! AHORA SOY YO, SOY YO, Y NADIE MAS. ¡Miren! ESTA chi-HUI-na. (Eliam)

³¹⁹ ¡Nadie anota mi nombre en este papel! ¡Nadie! ¡Nadie! Yo voy a anotar nombres pero nadie anota mi nombre. (Eliam) Recojan los papeles. (Reina)

³²⁰ Yo tengo un límite...¡Recójalos! No has hecho nada hoy.

³²¹ ¿Cuántos han terminado? Un minuto más para que terminen. No quiero escuchar ni una palabra de esa parte del aula. Estoy trabajando con los de primer grado.

used above. “But they don’t work with these kids,” she confided. “These kids need a strong hand, and some kids, like Eliam, respond only to a good whipping. I let the parents do that.”

Teachers viewed talking to students one-on-one as ineffective and an unnecessary yielding of power. It undermined the unquestioned and critical foundation of every adult-child relationship that was enveloped in the common phrase, “*Yo mando*” meaning “I rule” or “I am the boss.” A child was meant to respect every adult by respecting the credo, *Yo mando*. Conversations about student behavior circled back to these widely held beliefs that students had to respect the adult authorities in their lives – especially teachers and parents. *Yo mando* left no space for discussion or conversation. None was warranted or desired. In homes, parents regularly yelled the rhetorical question at their children who had misbehaved, “¿*Quién manda?*” which they immediately answered: “¿*Yo mando!*” reinforced by the threat, “*and don’t you forget it!*” Kids who did not understand or respect the essence of this adult-child relationship required a good whipping now and again to help them remember.

Fausto was the only multigrade teacher who practiced one-on-one advice talks in addition to the much more common group advice talks during school assembly and in each classroom. He drew on personal relationships he developed with each El Roble student from the time they entered first grade.

They always come to me, they are always following behind me. They tell me things and I’m like, ‘Ay!’ and ‘Uy!’, and I pat their heads, and I talk to them. That affective relationship is what makes them feel like they’re in a different environment. They have someone they can trust.³²²

Fausto also was the only teacher I met who played with students during recess, mostly handball in the front school grounds where he kept an eye on many of the younger students as well. His one-on-ones were similar to group talks – about the importance of learning, paying attention, doing school work – tailored to each student’s individual needs.

Some teachers felt the MINED played a central role in encouraging teachers to ignore student misbehavior. MINED officials, Fausto argued, separated academic learning from student behavior by focusing on academic grades – and teachers followed suit.

³²² Allá donde mí siempre lleguen. Allí van detrás de mí. Ellos están, y ellos me cuentan cuestiones, y yo estoy, ‘¡Ay!’ y ‘¡Uy!’ y yo les soco la cabeza, yo los, los, me pongo a platicar, me pongo a charlar con ellos y eso es, toda esa relación es un, es una, es afectiva y por lo tanto los niños se sienten en ambiente diferente. Tienen en quién confiar.

The teacher knows that what they are going to ask for are results of grades, not discipline. But one affects the other. Because one grade, you just have to look at Profesora R, the lack of discipline there makes the learning performance low. So, you cannot do the opposite, performance and then discipline.³²³

Fausto tied values to behaviors which, he said, was “where you see education quality. Forming people academically but also forming them as [humans].” Reina proved his point. She told parents in the first meeting of 2012 that, “we’re only teaching academics because there are big changes from the MINED. Now you all are responsible for your children’s behavior, not us.” The MINED had not announced this but, like Fausto argued, Reina understood the institutional emphasis on increasing education quality as improving academic measures: enrollment, grades, pass rates. Her announcement to parents underscored her belief that families were responsible for their children’s value and behaviors, not teachers or the MINED.

Unanimously, all teachers complained that MINED officials did not help them address student misbehavior and discipline – anti-values. Teachers learned nothing about classroom management in teacher preparation. MINED PD focused on GRUN values and community projects for Sandinista youth and adults. Fausto, a staunch Sandinista, explained his vision of how values translated into appropriate behaviors and relevant learning in classrooms.

Sometimes we only teach so a child passes the exams and all that. But that the child knows what, to add, to subtract, to multiply and divide, that will work in a store where I can take him...but what does the child produce from all that that I am giving?...Is he perceiving truthfully that education is something useful for his life?...I need to be forming values in him as well. So he can make, develop and engage in a society in which he is immersed. If I am not capable of making sure that child can engage in society, I have taught him nothing and he has learned nothing.

Aside from Fausto, though, most others teachers felt an enormous gap in the GRUN’s narrow values focus. They wanted MINED help in changing student classroom behaviors. Despite Murillo and other official declarations to the contrary, teachers said their students’ behaviors did not change when their parents benefitted from or participated in a GRUN project in the

³²³ Entonces, es lo mismo que tiene que ver con la programación. Pero lo que le digo yo, eso va a estar de acorde con el maestro. El maestro sabe que lo que le van a pedir son resultados de las notas. No es su disciplina. Pero a la una a la otra le afecta. Porque un grado, solo tiene que ver a la Profesora R. La indisciplina allí lo hace al rendimiento abajo. Entonces, no puede venir al contrario, rendimiento y después disciplina. Entonces, en esto está la calidad de la educación. Formar a personas académicamente pero también formarlos como, como tal.

community. Liria echoed her colleagues' concerns when she decried the GRUN focus on "values PD and information about government programs and slogans" and requested more concrete classroom support.

I want pedagogic advisors to accompany me in the classroom to help me with certain student behaviors, like bad attendance, learning disabilities... and violence.

They can talk all that political stuff, but I'm tired of that. I need help with Laurita. You know, she comes here maybe once a week, once every two weeks, and when she comes she fights, kicks, pulls everyone else off their work. She doesn't know what to do because she hasn't been here in days. She's always behind. Her mother left her. Her grandmother won't leave the house and come here to talk to me. They don't help me with her! But they [MINED officials] tell me I'm not doing my job if I don't pass her.

And then there's Gerson. You've seen it every day, every day he refuses to do his work, crosses his arms over his chest and refuses. And then he gets aggressive and violent with others. He's hitting his mother now – third grade! So soon he'll probably try to get violent with me...

Do they [MINED officials] help with that? No, they sit at their desks in their office or they come out here and check registers, looking for hairs in the soup, looking for problems, but they don't try to help solve anything...

And what about Lizbet, or Odel, Osmaro, Johan! You know, nothing goes in. I give and give and give, I give them information every day! What is it that I don't do? And they never learn. The more I explain, that I give them [information], it's like, what happens? A cloud of gas, of smoke, for them...

And do the [pedagogic] advisors help me with them? No, nothing! They talk values, values, values, the importance of values, and they have no idea what it's like here in the classroom. Anti-values everywhere, not one value! Their values talk and project don't help me here.

Teachers equated classroom management with threats and corporal punishment from their experiences as students and parents. The overwhelming majority of adults in San José managed a child's behavior – in and out of the classroom – with threats, yelling, switches, belts, one-meter ruler whacks, a long twist and pull on an ear, and public humiliation. Several parents in Ambrosia's class gave her permission to physically punish their children; one mother told her, "She [her daughter] can put up with being hit or whipped, but what she really hates is when you twist her ear. So if she misbehaves, twist her ear."³²⁴ Some kids

³²⁴ SPANISH HERE

went as far as to bring their teacher a green branch in the morning, “if I misbehave today.”³²⁵ Teachers asserted that they taught better, and students learned better, when they used corporal punishment in the classroom. Since the Convention and GRUN prohibitions on that recourse “tie our hands,” teachers said they had “no other option than to watch” as “stubborn” and “insolent” kids pushed, shoved, and fought “while they are supposed to be doing their school work.”

All teachers longed for a past when they could freely use punitive punishments and for when students were more docile. “In those days, students never acted like they do today,” Fausto said. “They were educated (well-mannered).” Ambrosia remembered how “no student even thought about yelling at the teacher or hitting someone in the classroom. They knew. They knew they would get it, and strongly...a switch, a twisted ear, a rap with the ruler.” Teachers, parents and many MINED officials shared a belief that corporal punishment was not only the most effective tool to maintain control in the classroom, it was the only tool – and the only way they knew.

Teacher practices addressing classroom anti-values behaviors. Teachers most commonly addressed student misbehavior through punishments, blame, accusations, and threats to lower student grades. Despite the MINED and international prohibition on corporal punishment, all teachers continued to use it. The wave of anti-values behaviors and today’s youth required it. Though they expressed having no faith in alternative classroom management strategies, they complemented corporal punishment with several other methods. Many favored emotional punishments, public blame and accusations, threats to change grades based on behaviors, and a mix of caring with these. A regular fixture in the classroom was “the talk” in which teachers tried to instill values behaviors in students through a combination of advice, scoldings and blame. I describe each of these below.

Punitive punishments. Most elementary school teachers kept a green branch as a switch on their table or the chalk-holder of the blackboard; some preferred the one-meter wooden ruler to rap on small knuckles and several used their hands to hit students and pull-and-twist an ear. Several teachers aimed to hit their students hard, while others threatened or tapped. Emilia and Reina (Regalia infrequently) chased students around the room trying to physically grab or hit them. One day in mid-chase, Emilia hit a boy with the one-meter ruler.

³²⁵ Si soy malcriado (o malcriada) hoy – though mostly boys brought the switches

When he laughed, she threatened to bring something bigger and heavier, “Then it will hurt and maybe you’ll pay attention.”³²⁶ Though she rarely caught a boy before he ran out the classroom door, one day Emilia caught Norvin. She yanked on his ear, and as she led him back to his desk twisting his right ear while pulling hard she yelled to the entire class: “Aren’t you all embarrassed that Francie has done everything and you all have not one thing?”³²⁷ She hit the boy with the ruler. “You aren’t embarrassed?”³²⁸ Without waiting for an answer, she continued to yell. “If the ruler isn’t good enough for you, maybe this”³²⁹ (she pulled and twisted his right ear). The boy fell down, twisting his body the other way so it didn’t hurt so much. He writhed for over five seconds before she let him go.

Emilia, Regalia and Reina regularly locked students in and out of their classrooms. This usually started after a group of students left the classroom without asking permission and remained outside playing. We could all be locked inside the classroom for over an hour at a time with no bathroom privileges and the windows all closed. Once the students outside got bored, they began to bang rhythmically on the metal or wood doors with their fists, bodies, feet. The noise overpowered all spoken word inside the classroom. Fausto compared his approach to the “jailer”-teacher who converts her classroom into a jail atmosphere.

With me, they have someone with whom they can talk, can play. Why don’t they seek out their teacher? If I am only in the classroom, PLA, PLA, PLA, PLA, PLA, PLA, slamming doors, leaving some outside, leaving some inside, hitting and threatening them, then I am like a jailer. “You need to go to the bathroom? Then,” PLA [a hit, or slam of the door]. “You want water? Bring me water,” and PLA [a hit, or slam of the door]. That’s not right.³³⁰

Teachers regularly took away recess (and threatened to do so much more frequently) despite MINED orders not to do so. In conversations about this contested policy, teachers blamed the students and insisted they had no choice. “I am so sorry,” Ambrosia yelled one morning, her voice dripping in sarcasm. “But there will be no recess for those who are

³²⁶ Que así le va a doler y quizás así hace caso.

³²⁷ ¿No tienen pena que Francie tiene todo hecho y nadita tienen ustedes?

³²⁸ ¿No tienes pena?

³²⁹ Si no te vale la regla, quizás esto.

³³⁰ ¿Por qué no buscan a su maestra? Tienen en con quien hablar. Tienen con quien jugar. Pero si yo solo estoy en el aula, PLA, PLA, PLA, PLA, PLA, PLA, cerrando puertas y cerrando y dejándolos afuera, dejándolos adentro, pegándoles, amenazándoles, no, allí, allí estoy, como, como, como un, le digo, como un carcelero. ¿Tienen ganas de ir a orinar? Entonces, y PLA [cierra la puerta]. ¿Quiere agua? Tráeme agua, y PLA [cierra la puerta]. No es así.

standing. It's your fault. I warned you, many times."³³¹ The threats continued throughout the morning. "That is enough!" she yelled. "No one goes to recess. A lot of work, a lot of noise, you all already lost recess."³³² She became more and more angry, spitting out the words. A few minutes later she began again. "Whoever has not worked is not going to leave. Yolet does not want to work. She is going to stay. Yolet, I don't know what I'm going to do with you!"³³³ She shook her head, standing with her arms crossed looking at tiny Yolet who continued to look at stickers. "I am going to call your mother," Ambrosia said unconvincingly. "And Leonela can't leave until she finishes."³³⁴ Leonela had copied the assignment three separate times from the board. Each time she took her notebook to Ambrosia to check, Ambrosia had told her it was wrong. Leonela returned to copy it again the exact same way. She had no idea what she was doing wrong.

Emotional punishments. Teachers used a toolbox of emotional punishments throughout the school day. These included public humiliation in the classroom and school assembly – in front of peers in both settings. Teachers often outed individual students, mostly boys, for not coming to school to learn. "Ulises!" Liria yelled out. "All you do is play. Why do you even come to school? To play. Just to play."³³⁵ She shook her head and turned to a third grader. "Mauricio! ¡Por favor!" Mauricio was fighting with two girls.

If you come to fight, I've already told you, don't enter. [She turned to me.] And they are cousins, family! You'd never guess. Outside of school they play, and they come here to fight. Cousins fighting in front of everyone. It doesn't bother them. It should be an embarrassment, but not for them."³³⁶

A common tactic was to talk to the entire class about a student, referring to the student in the third person even as she or he was standing next to the teacher, running around the room, or sitting at their seat. All teachers outed students as they misbehaved or after. "Kevin! The student who doesn't copy or do any work fights for the books. Insolent!"³³⁷

³³¹ Lo siento mucho. Pero no hay receso para los que están parados. Es culpa de ustedes, ya les avisé, y varias veces.

³³² Ya es demasiado. Nadie va a receso. Mucha tarea, mucha bulla. Ya perdieron el receso.

³³³ Lo que no ha trabajado no va a salir. Yolet no quiere trabajar. Ya se va a quedar. Yolet, ¡no sé qué voy a hacer contigo!

³³⁴ Voy a llamar a la mama. Y Leonela no puede hasta que termina.

³³⁵ Solo a jugar. ¿Por qué viene a la escuela? A jugar. Solo a jugar.

³³⁶ Si vienen a pelear ya les he dicho, no entrar. Y son primos, familia! Nunca lo adivinarías, verdad? Afuera juegan juntos y llegan aquí y pelean. Primos, peleando en frente de todos. No les da pena. Debería ser una pena, pero no para ellos. Para ellos no.

³³⁷ El que no copea ni hace nada de trabajar pelea por los libros. ¡Atrevido!

Children who did not work were particularly susceptible to being called out publicly and in the third person. “Since Jaime came, she hasn’t been in class,” Reina pronounced loudly one day. “She is enjoying herself.”³³⁸ Another day when a student found another students’ test on Emilia’s desk, he ran to show Emilia that there was only a cover page. Emilia held up the exam to the class. “Naydeling didn’t do the exam. Look, she didn’t answer anything. She didn’t answer even one question. Nothing. That’s right. The majority of you didn’t do anything. You didn’t study. You don’t do anything and still you want a passing grade.”³³⁹

The humiliations were not only with peers. Emilia one day grabbed a fourth grader and to slow her down he grabbed another student’s knapsack hanging off the back of a chair. Emilia tried to pry his hands loose, and could not. She threw him down onto the floor. The music of coins falling out of his pockets called everyone’s attention. Several ran around picking up the coins. Emilia taunted: “You lost your money. What are they going to say at home when you tell your mama you lost your money?”³⁴⁰

All teachers used sarcasm liberally. They routinely predicted students would fail their grade or never do an assignment well. Emilia explained the students’ folders in which she put their work for the grading quarter.

You will have all your work here [she held a folder] and you will see. ‘Here the Profe took away points because I did not learn this because I didn’t pay attention, and here she failed me for being undisciplined,’ and so on. Each one of you will be able to see everything, and understand why you failed the grade, right?’³⁴¹

Liria gave loud feedback to a group of fourth graders as they submitted an assignment.

What a pretty presentation. It doesn’t help me that you do everything pretty and then you all do this mess. I need names here, here and here. And in neat handwriting, not that mess. And you probably didn’t check your answers, did you? Of course you didn’t!³⁴²

She threw the papers down on a student’s desk and walked away.

³³⁸ Desde que Jaime vino, no está en clase. Está disfrutando.

³³⁹ Naydeling no hizo el sistemático. Mire, no contestó nada. No contestó ni una pregunta. Nada. Pues sí. La mayoría no hicieron nada. No estudiaron. No hacen nada y aún quieren pasar.

³⁴⁰ ¡Perdiste tu dinero! ¿Qué te van a decir en la casa cuando dices a tu mama que perdiste tu dinero?

³⁴¹ Van a tener todo su trabajo aquí y van a ver. “Aquí la Profe me quitó puntos porque no aprendí esto porque no hice caso, y aquí me sacó por ser indisciplinado,” y así. Van a poder ver todo, y cada uno – vos y vos y vos – va a entender porque se quedó, ¿verdad?

³⁴² Qué bonita la presentación. Nada me sirve hacerlo bonito y después ustedes hacen esto. Necesito los nombres aquí, aquí y aquí. Y a lo mejor ni chequearon las respuestas, ¿verdad? ¡Claro que no!

Reina threatened to return students to grades they had passed. Because of their behaviors, she told them, they would repeat a grade once more – and it was their fault. One day, when several third graders in the front of the classroom answered questions she was asking the first graders in the back of the classroom, she turned on them and yelled.

Enough! Are you all in first grade? Do you want to return to first grade? I see that you do. I will change your report card and I'll put you in first grade. Don't even think I won't do it. I will do it tomorrow if you continue like this. Speak once more and you come back to first grade and start all over.³⁴³

Another day when a second grader (repeater) played with the first graders, she levied a similar question:

Donald, are you in first grade again? You didn't pass to second? Did I make a mistake? You didn't pass to second? Look everyone, Donald is repeating first grade again. Donald is in first grade again. He never passed to second. Look! Donald is returning to first!³⁴⁴

Teachers also used public humiliation after the school meal, threatening to kick individual students out of the classroom for the day. "Leave if you are not going to work, *Fulano*" "*Fulana*, if you are not going to be here, then leave," "I will close [the door or gate to the school] and lock you out if you don't come back inside," and ³⁴⁵ "*Fulano*, the road is clear so people can pass. Use it!" I only saw teachers follow through on these threats with chronic repeater students, infrequently. By June, Liria offered a new twist on this threat: she threatened to leave "and you get to explain to your moms why I left before classes ended."³⁴⁶

Blame: Students were responsible for not learning. As part of classroom management, teachers repeatedly blamed students for not learning. They used phrases like "you'll never learn," "you never study" and "you never do anything" repeatedly. In conversations and to students, they explained that students never paid attention, they did not study, and they forgot what they learned immediately. Emilia complained to students that

³⁴³ ¡Ya! ¿Ustedes están en primer grado? ¿Ya quieren venir a primer grado? Veo que quieren regresar a tercero. Cambiaría tu boletín y les pondré en primero. Ni piensan que no lo hago. Lo hago mañana si siguen así. Hablan una vez más y vienes de regreso a primer grado y empiezan de nuevo.

³⁴⁴ ¿Donald, ¿estás en primero otra vez? ¿No pasaste a segundo? ¿Hice un error? ¿No pasaste a segundo? Miren todos, Donald está volviendo a primero. Donald está en primero otra vez. Nunca pasó a segundo. ¡Miren! ¡Donald está regresando a primero!

³⁴⁵ Salíte si no vas a trabajar; Si no van a estar, que me salen; Cerraré (la puerta o el portón) y ustedes estarán afuera si no regresan ahorita; Fulano, el camino está libre para que pase la gente. ¡Utilícelo!

³⁴⁶ Y ustedes pueden explicarles a sus mamás por qué me fui antes de que terminaron las clases.

they did not learn from her daily dictations; she interchanged spelling words with number names every other morning.

I dictate and dictate and I dictate to you and you always forget the “m.” [She walks among the desks, looking down at each student’s notebook.] She had it wrong, he’s wrong, he’s wrong, she’s wrong, you two already fixed it. I dictate to you each day, the same, the same, the same, and you never write it well. You have no one but yourselves to blame.³⁴⁷

One morning Liria found her students writing on the blackboard after she had left to talk with a parent. She scolded them from the doorway for being out of their seats (she had not provided them with an assignment before leaving). When she looked at their writing on the blackboard, she turned to them, shaking her head. “You all can’t even write, you can’t even write, look. Look! You write on the blackboard and you can’t even write. What a shame! You have to learn to write and you can’t, you don’t want to.”³⁴⁸ This denigrated into other accusations. Pridi one day in a moment of frustration yelled to her students, “Don’t go home and tell your parents that you failed because the teacher didn’t teach you. Go home and tell them the truth. You didn’t learn. You didn’t study. You didn’t try.”

Teachers told students that one reason they didn’t learn was because they didn’t study at home or do homework. Though students began the year doing homework, by May almost no one brought homework to school. This provoked teacher outbursts in classrooms each day. “No one brought [a plant],” Pridi shouted when not one of her 24 students brought a plant as she had assigned them for the second time the previous day. After an initial outburst like the one above, teachers often launched into broad generalizations, as Pridi did about the plants. “You never bring anything. Nothing! What’s going on with you all? You never bring anything!”³⁴⁹ This then led to another round of related generalizations, usually with a rising voice. “You all don’t do anything! Really lazy you are. You are stubborn, stubborn, stubborn. And insolent. Disrespectful to everyone. I don’t know how your parents put up with you. I

³⁴⁷ Yo les dicte y dicte y les dicto y siempre se les olvide la ‘m.’ Les dicte y les dicte y les dicte y nada. Les dicte, les dicte, les dicte, les dicte, les dicte y miren. Ella la tenía mala, el [lo tiene] mala, el [lo tiene] mala, ella [lo tiene] mala, ustedes dos ya la compusieron. Les dicte cada día, lo mismo, lo mismo, lo mismo, lo mismo y nunca la escriben bien. No tienen que culpar a nadie más que ustedes mismos.

³⁴⁸ Ni pueden escribir, ni pueden escribir, miren. Miren, escriben en la pizarra, y ni pueden escribir. ¡Qué lástima! Tienen que aprender a escribir, y no pueden, no quieren.

³⁴⁹ Nadie trae. Nunca traen nada, ¡NADA! ¿Qué pasa con ustedes? ¡Nunca traen NADA!

can't.”³⁵⁰ After long weekends (of which there were many) and longer vacations, teachers regularly accused students of not studying. After the week-long mid-year vacation, Ambrosia accused all her second graders of refusing to open their notebooks, without evidence.

Now that you had a week of vacation, and I think many of you never looked at your notebooks – not one number, not one letter – so today we are going to do an exercise to remember addition, subtraction and how to write numbers.³⁵¹

Teachers blamed students for not remembering content from a previous day's lesson. When Ambrosia reviewed synonyms and antonyms for a second day with her second graders, she told the first graders to listen “because you learn that way, too.” When no second grader gave her a synonym for the first word, or the second, or the third, she exploded.

The second graders all forgot what we talked about yesterday. None of them were paying attention. Right now several of you are not paying attention just like yesterday. You don't listen and that's why you don't learn anything. Remember we did those lists of characteristics? You have all these words in your notebooks! You don't study at all! I think the chairs are learning more than you all. You are just thinking in how you are going to bother others! Your heads are in grave shape. Nothing stays inside. Nothing! What are you all going to do?

Ambrosia repeated the previous day's assignment “so you learn it this time.” After 45 minutes of chaos and noise, Ambrosia yelled out, “I see that Alexandra hasn't done anything. She only comes to play. Mauricio! I want to see you quiet. Antony, bring your notebook.”³⁵² Head down, Antony got up slowly and took his notebook to her. “And look!” Ambrosia shouted to the class. “Antony hasn't done even one because he doesn't pay attention. You never pay attention. You'll never learn anything, Antony.”³⁵³ She threw his notebook down on the desk.

Pridi expressed similar frustrations and blame with her fifth and sixth graders.

How many times have I taught this? How ridiculous! How ridiculous! (She picks up a piece of chalk and it looks like she will throw it at someone. She turns back to the board and writes: What is a map?) How ridiculous! How ridiculous! You can't respond to such simple questions, and ones I gave you yesterday. Some left the

³⁵⁰ ¡No hacen nada! Bien haraganes son ustedes. Son necios. Necios, necios. No sé cómo les aguantan sus padres. Yo no les aguanto.

³⁵¹ Ya que tuvieron una semana de vacación, y yo creo que muchos no vieron sus cuadernos – ni un número, ni una letra - hoy vamos a hacer un ejercicio de recordar sumas, restas, como escribir números.

³⁵² Yo veo que Alexandra no ha hecho nada. Solo viene a jugar. ¡Mauricio! Quiero verte callado. Antony, traiga tu cuaderno.

³⁵³ Y, miren! Ni una ha hecho Antony porque no pone atención. ¡No pones atención nunca! Nunca vas a aprender nada, Antony.

classroom because they thought we were not going to have a test, they didn't take it seriously. How ridiculous! Now, whoever doesn't work, tomorrow they come with their mother.³⁵⁴

She did not follow through on her threat. The next day no one came to school with their mother.

Teachers linked their low expectations for student learning with student behaviors, blaming students for their poor performances in different subjects saying they had no choice but to expect little or nothing. Some implanted their expectations into exercises and instruction. Teachers explained they had to “use every moment to point out student bad behavior” and “what they have to improve.”³⁵⁵ Regalia, Reina and Emilia had the lowest attendance of all teachers with up to half (and sometimes more) of students enrolled in their grades not attending class each day. Regalia reflected this tendency in the following math problem she gave her fourth graders: “In the school there are 618 students enrolled and 119 did not attend classes today. How many students attended classes today?”³⁵⁶ In her problem, 20% of the students did not attend, “which is better than you all,” she muttered as she gave them the answer.

Blame: Students were to blame for their bad behaviors. School principals and teachers got frustrated when students did not perform well in cross-school events because, they told students, it reflected poorly on them. During a School Assembly following after a multi-school celebration of a local NGO, Fausto scolded students and blamed their behaviors on his decision to no longer take them outside the community to any event.

We can't take you anywhere! When the event finished, there were dozens of brochure on the ground. A brochure is a folded paper that has information about hygiene and health care. Dozens and dozens on the ground, and I saw a lot of you and other students ripping them, throwing them, destroying them. You all only know how to destroy things, and you like to destroy. Do you know how much money an organization like World Vision invests in giving us that information? And in

³⁵⁴ ¿Cuántas veces les he enseñado esto? ¡Qué barbaridad! ¡Qué barbaridad! (she writes, “What is a map?” on the board.) ¡Qué barbaridad! ¡Qué barbaridad! No pueden responder a unas preguntas tan sencillas, y que les dimos ayer. Algunos salieron del salón porque creyeron que no íbamos a tener un examen, no lo tomaron en serio. ¡Qué barbaridad! Ahora, quien no trabaje mañana viene con la mama.

³⁵⁵ Señalar sus malos comportamientos y que tenían que mejorar.

³⁵⁶ En la escuela hay 618 estudiantes matriculados y 119 no asistieron a clase el día de hoy. ¿Cuántos estudiantes asistieron a clase hoy?

gratitude, you all destroy them. I think no one read them, and they have very valuable information. But you don't demonstrate interest.

And then they say that we the teachers are the ones that don't teach you how to behave, how to take care of things, how to respect. It was embarrassing. (He shakes his head and looks down at the ground. With a heavy sigh he looks back up at the six rows of students in front of him.)

We can't take you all anywhere because of your own behaviors. We have received invitations to go to the overlook ("El Mirador"), but what for? To take you all so you throw yourselves into the abyss and we return with no one? It's better not to take you. We can't take you anywhere!

We will receive an invitation to go to (another place). But we can't take you all. We will go without you all because we never know how you are going to behave, and you all are always disrespectful and stubborn, behaving badly, badly, badly. I don't even want to take you, I don't even want to see you because you don't behave well. I don't have any desire to take you all. We will go without you and you all can stay at home. I don't even want to look at you all.³⁵⁷

The behaviors Fausto cited were applicable to all students in attendance, not just those from El Roble. It provided an opportune excuse to blame students for a decision Fausto made. He could tell anyone, which he did, that he no longer invited his students because they were so misbehaved, and he blamed families for their misbehavior. Several months earlier, he had erroneously told students they were not invited to the regional Mother's Day celebration held at the San Jose High School. "Stay at home," he told all the students in Assembly. "Give your mothers a rest from your bad behavior. They cannot take you. They cannot take any children, only infants, of course, are allowed. But they have to be infants. Infants only." The El Roble children were the only ones absent at the event. Reina and Liria agreed with Fausto,

³⁵⁷ No podemos llevarlos por ningún lado. Cuando termino el evento, habían docenas de broshúr en el suelo. Un broshúr es el papel doblado que tenía información sobre el higiene y salud. Docenas y docenas en el suelo, y vi varios de ustedes y otros estudiantes rompiéndolos, tirándolos, destruyéndolos. Solo saben cómo destruir, y les gusta destruir. ¿Saben cuánto invierte una organización como Visión Mundial en darnos esa información? Y de gratitud ustedes los destruyen. Yo creo que nadie los leyó y tienen información muy valiosa. Pero no demuestran interés. Y después dicen que somos nosotros los maestros que no les enseñan cómo comportarse, cómo cuidar las cosas, cómo respetar. Era una pena. No podemos llevarlos por ningún lado por su propio comportamiento. Hemos recibido invitaciones para irnos al Mirador allá arriba, ¿y para qué? ¿Para llevarles a ustedes para que se tiren en el abismo y regresamos sin nadie? Mejor no los llevamos. No podemos llevarlos por ningún lado. Recibiremos una invitación (a otro lugar). Pero no podemos llevarlos. Mejor nosotros vamos sin ustedes porque nunca se sabe cómo se van a comportar y ustedes siempre son irrespetuosos y necios, comportándose mal, mal, mal. Ni quiero llevarlos, ni quiero verlos, porque no se comportan bien. No tengo ningún deseo llevarlos. Mejor vamos sin ustedes y se quedan en casa. Ni quiero verlos.

and chose students “who were well behaved” for cross-school events “so people don’t say ‘those teachers don’t do anything.’”

Blame: Students were responsible for parents blaming teachers. All teachers expressed a high level of defensiveness around people in general, and parents in particular, blaming them for not teaching, not doing their jobs. Teachers liberally blamed students for blame placed on teachers. One May morning in the School Assembly, Fausto exploded because the dozen El Roble students selected to participate at a cross-school competition the previous day had forgotten information they had been taught about values. “You all are terrible students!” he roared, as if all of them had been invited and attended. “None of you have learned anything all year” because “you come to school just to play” and “you never pay attention. You will never learn.” Three mothers sat on the corridor wall inside the school grounds listening. A father stopped on his bicycle outside the school fence.

At the Institute, when they asked, “Why do we need to take care of the environment?” no one knew. No one answered. Not one student! And those who did speak, what they said had nothing to do with the question. NOTHING! It was incoherent, all over the map, disconnected. And when they asked, “What are the values practiced by a good citizen?” No one answered. No one knew? How could that be? I talk about it here in School Assembly. All of us talk about it in our classrooms, repeatedly.

So when people ask, “What are those teachers doing with the kids? They’re certainly not teaching them, because none of them know any of this.” Then they come to complain to the teachers. They tell us we aren’t doing our jobs. They say things, like, “You give my son the evil eye, I’ve seen you” or “You don’t like my daughter, I know,” or “You didn’t pass him for this and this reason, but that’s not right. I’m going to denounce you.” Some go to the MINED to say these things to get us into trouble. Well, let me tell you something right now. Teachers do not fail students. Students fail themselves.

Teachers throughout elementary and high school used this last phrase frequently around exam time – in classrooms and during PD: “Teachers do not fail students; students fail themselves.”

Blame: Students were to blame for getting hurt on school grounds. Teachers regularly blamed students for getting hurt on school grounds, from everything to skinning a knee to getting stung by bees. They used the accusation to ignore hurt children (“if you had listened you wouldn’t be hurt in the first place” – Pelucita) and refuse help or comfort (“Don’t pay any attention to Fulano. He deserves what he got. I told him and he didn’t

listen.” – Emilia). When one of Ambrosia’s second graders was stung in the eye and had a mildly allergic reaction, she launched into a 5-minute scolding tirade, refused to help, and told several concerned children to leave him alone. Fausto used the School Assembly to scold everyone when a danger affected all grades, like bee hives in classroom ceilings and nearby trees.

The other day at least three girls got stung by bees. They were running around, not paying attention to the teachers telling them to stop running, and the bees stung them. Here [he puts his fingers to his eyes and cheeks], here [he signals his neck with his fingers] and here [he signals his arms]. Bees never attack unless they feel under attack, so the people who get stung must be provoking them. At my house we have a beehive by the front door and no one bothers them. I have my grandchildren living there, all different ages the same as here, and those bees have never stung anyone. Not once. So why are so many students getting stung? Because they are so unruly and out of control. It must stop.

Fausto and other teachers mandated behavior changes among their students in schools and classrooms. Their mandates, the said, were supposed to be sufficient to achieve change.

Accusations: Students lied. Teachers regularly accused students of lying – about little things and bigger things, like lying to parents that teachers didn’t teach or about why they had been absent. Teachers accused students most days of lying to parents and telling them their teacher didn’t teach. “One hundred minus fifty equals fifty,” Pridi recited to her fifth and sixth graders. She then looked up.

The [multiplication] tables are learned quickly. Quickly, so you all don’t say, ‘Hmm, that Profe hasn’t done anything.’ If it’s something you don’t want to hear, you say, ‘I didn’t hear,’ or ‘She didn’t teach that,’ or ‘She never gave that,’ and you put the teacher in a bad light, even inventing that we haven’t done something or you haven’t heard anything about something we did do in class. Are any of you going to say it’s a lie? Someone? You can’t. You can’t, because it’s true.³⁵⁸

Pridi then suddenly changed tack. “And one more thing,” she said lowering her voice dramatically and looking around as if about to tell a secret she didn’t want anyone else to hear. “This is part of my job,” she whispered, “and that’s why I tell you, so people don’t say

³⁵⁸ Cien menos cincuenta igual a cincuenta. Rapidito se aprenden las tablas. Rapidito, para que no dicen, ‘Hmm, esa Profe no ha hecho nada.’ Si no es algo que quieren escuchar dicen, ‘No escuche,’ ‘No enseno eso’ o ‘Nunca no dio eso,’ y así ponen a la maestra en mal, hasta inventar que no hemos hecho algo, o no has escuchado nada de algo. Van a decir que es mentira? Alguien va a decir que es mentira? No se puede. No se puede.

‘Those Profes don’t teach anything’: Throw the trash in its place and keep this place [she points to the corridor] clean.’³⁵⁹

To begin a Language and Literature class, Ambrosia wrote on the blackboard, “Redact sentences with the following names.”³⁶⁰ She listed “León” (a city and state) and seven people’s names. The achievement indicator in her lesson plan was “Describe your environment by relating experiences where common and proper nouns are used.” The content listing was “the noun”³⁶¹ (MINED, 2011, p. 7-8). She turned to her second graders. “Who has been to León?” she asked. She did not specify the city of León or anywhere in the state of León. Five of the eight present raised their hands, as did a few first graders. “Let’s see,” Ambrosia looked around the room. “What’s in front of the cathedral?” She paused. “Now we will see who is lying.” She called on a second grade boy and repeated the question. He said he didn’t know. “That’s why I ask,” Ambrosia says. “To see who is lying.”³⁶² She asked a first grader. He said he didn’t know because he had been to his aunt’s house in León, not the cathedral. She asked several more kids and none of them knew. Then, she told them the answer. “There are two lions in front of the cathedral. You all lied.” She launched this accusation against all of them even after the first grader explained he had been to León but not the cathedral. She continued the lesson as if the accusation of lying was simply part of it.

How do we know these are proper nouns? (She points to the 8 names she has written on their side of the board.) Because they all begin with a capital letter (she answers her question). Not like common nouns. What are common nouns? Shoes, food (she answers). What else? Rice. Those do not have capital letters. Copy.³⁶³

She then began to write the first grade assignment on the board. She gave the 2nd graders 100 minutes to write the eight sentences.

Teachers routinely accused students of lying about the reasons for their absences.

³⁵⁹ Y una cosa más. Y este es parte de mi trabajo, por eso les digo, y para que la gente no dice que esas Profes no enseñan nada, echen la basura en su lugar, y mantengan este lugar limpio.

³⁶⁰ Redacte oraciones con los siguientes nombres: León, Marta, Reyna, Guadalupe, Susana, Petrona, Joel, Alex

³⁶¹ Describe su entorno al relatar experiencias personales donde se utilice sustantivos comunes y propios; El nombre.

³⁶² ¿Quién ha viajado a León? Vamos a ver. ¿Qué hay en frente de la catedral? Ahora vamos a ver quién está mintiendo. Por eso les pregunto. Para identificar quién está mintiendo.

³⁶³ Hay dos leones en frente de la catedral. Todos ustedes mintieron. ¿Cómo sabemos que estos son nombres propios? Porque todos empiezan con mayúscula. No como los nombres comunes. ¿Qué son nombre comunes? Zapato, comida, que más? Rice. Esos no tienen mayúsculas. Copien.

You don't come to school and then say the next day when you come that you were sick, when really you were lazying around the house. That's what happens to you all with homework, too. You come and you tell me, 'I didn't do the homework because I had a headache,' when really you spent the afternoon watching soap operas with your mama. That's what happens with you all, right?³⁶⁴

Ambrosia (above) demonstrated how teacher accusations often multiplied in the midst of an outburst as teachers remembered more things they believed students lied about.

Threats to change grades due to students misbehaviors. With the enormous MINED focus on grades and passing, all teachers threatened to take points away from students for their behavior. With the new 60/40 grading system and automatic promotion, teachers constantly shouted, "I'm jotting down your behavior" and "I'm taking away points" as they sat at a desk reviewing students' notebooks. Sometimes the threats came against the entire grade ("And if you keep yelling about other students doing things, Rony, I'll take points away from all the second grade," "The disturbances are already beginning. I am going to begin, too. You all are losing 15 points," "I am going to repeat. One who is standing takes away points from everyone." "You all show no respect! I am going to put zero for everyone."³⁶⁵ Throughout the day, teachers singled out individual students as well: "¡Roxana! I am going to lower Roxana's grade."³⁶⁶

Towards the end of the school day as teacher exhaustion set in along with chronic headaches, the threats became more critical and serious. Emilia's threats rang in every classrooms: "I am going to fail you all! You will be with me again, for another year of copying, another year to be copying, you'll see."³⁶⁷ Liria launched similar threats: "You all are going to fall another year into fourth grade, because you don't do anything."³⁶⁸ Infrequently, teachers threatened to lower points or a grade for students not complying, but these threats got mixed with general ones. Teachers often threatened to extend a zero on one assignment to a zero for the entire class, like Pridi did after yelling at students for not

³⁶⁴ No vienen a la escuela y dicen el próximo día cuando llegan que estaba enfermo, cuando realmente anduvo de haragán en la casa. Así pasa con ustedes con la tarea también. Vienen y me dicen, No hice la tarea porque me dolía la cabeza, cuando realmente pasaron viendo las novelas en el tele con su mama. Así pasa con ustedes, ¿verdad? ¿Verdad?

³⁶⁵ Ya empiezan el desorden. Ya voy a empezar. Están perdiendo los 15 puntos;" "Voy a repetir. Uno que anda parado quita puntos de todos." (Ambrosia); ¡No respetan! Les voy a poner cero. (Regalia)

³⁶⁶ Ya le voy a bajar la nota de Roxana (Ambrosia). ¿Está dando la respuesta? Te voy a dar cero. (Regalia).

³⁶⁷ Les voy a aplazar! Van a estar conmigo otra vez, para otro ano de estar copiando, otro ano de estar copiando, van a ver.

³⁶⁸ Van a caer otra vez en cuarto grado, por no hacer nada.

bringing plants (above). “Tomorrow I don’t want you to come without earth, without plants. Please, bring what you are responsible for. Make a note because I don’t want to give you a zero for OTV.”³⁶⁹

Several teachers used exams as a threat when chaos and mayhem became too much for them, when students did not answer teacher questions, or when students refused to participate during what teachers deemed reviews of content. Liria’s scolding below sounded like many others from other classrooms and teachers.

You obviously haven’t studied. None of you have studied this. (She yells at them for a minute or so.) I told you all to study and you didn’t study. When I tell you to study it’s because you are going to have a test. You all knew you were going to have a test and still you didn’t study. Why do you even come to school? You don’t come to school to learn, because none of you ever learn. Since you don’t study, and you don’t want to learn, you’re going to take a test. Go back to your desks. Put them in rows for the exam. Change them!

Emilia used frequent exams to have students change classroom desks into rows and impose some kind of quiet on students. At times it worked, and other times it did not. Pridi, like other teachers, threatened to not comply with MINED orders to give as many tests as needed to help all students pass.

And listen up, you all. I am not going to make a test, test, test every day so you can get a 90 at the end of the year. That helps only those who are unconcerned. You all don’t care. You have to worry more. And this is the last time that I signal all the errors for you and you take it home. Not anymore! So many unconcerned students. You have to be more concerned. You should see that it is to help you get better. Not to do you harm!³⁷⁰

One of the more effective threats, even if only temporarily, was a kind of threat teachers launched about their school losing relationships or extra support due to student misbehavior. In Los Coquitos, all three teachers threatened that their Swiss sister city would no longer give school supplies to misbehaved students specifically, and possibly the entire school because of those who misbehaved. “They told us they will no longer give them to

³⁶⁹ Mañana no quiero que vengan sin tierra, sin plantas. Por favor, traiga lo que les compete. Haga nota, porque no quiero darles un cero para OTV.

³⁷⁰ Y oigan, ustedes. No voy a hacer sistemático, sistemático, sistemático todos los días para que salen con 90 a final del año. Eso ayuda solo a los despreocupados y los malagradecidos. Les vale. Tienen que preocuparse más. Y ya es la última vez que les señalo todos los errores y lo llevan para la casa. Ya no. Tantos despreocupados. Tienen que preocuparse más. Ven que es para que mejoren. No para hacer mal.

students who came to play or make trouble, the insolent and undisciplined ones”³⁷¹ Reina told the students.

They will come and review each student’s notebook and decide according to the work they have done or not done, if it is organized or not, clean, not marked, neat handwriting. The students that have worked and are orderly will receive a new notebook. The rest of you will not. And those of you who draw in your notebooks will lose also. We will help them identify the students who should get new notebooks because we know who you are and how you act.³⁷²

Emilia continued the same threat in her classroom.

¿Do you see? Yaritza will get a notebook because when they come to review the notebooks, they’ll see that she does good work, very organized, neat handwriting, everything in order. But Balfor, you fill your notebook with those drawings so you won’t get another notebook. Your parents will have to pay for other ones because you don’t work in class or study. When they see other notebooks, they will see who else doesn’t do any work.³⁷³

In El Roble, all three teachers threatened students that I would not return because of student behaviors. “Do you see?” Ambrosia asked her students one day after I returned from a trip outside the country.

She chooses to be here. She wants to be here. She wants to work with you, who knows why. She wants to help you even if you don’t want her help. So that means you will behave well, right? We both want to teach you things, to read and write, do numbers, and when you all behave well everything is fine. But when you don’t, she doesn’t have to continue working with you all. Who would want to when you all are so misbehaved? There are days when I don’t want to come [to school] and once here there are moments when I want to run away from here. You all give me a headache almost every day with your shouting and fighting and insolence and stubbornness. When you are so badly behaved, I don’t want to be here with you all. But I have to stay, she doesn’t.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ Nos dijeron que ya no darán cuadernos a los estudiantes que vienen a jugar o hacer desorden, los insolentes e indisciplinados.

³⁷² Nos dijeron que no van a dar a los estudiantes que vienen a jugar o hacer desorden. Van a revisar el cuaderno de cada estudiante y decidir según el trabajo que han hecho o no han hecho, si esta ordenado o no, limpio, no manchado, buena letra. Los que han trabajado y están ordenados recibirán un nuevo cuaderno. Los otros, no. Y los que dibujan en sus cuadernos van a perder también. Y nosotras vamos a ayudarles en identificar quienes deberían recibir nuevos cuadernos, porque nosotras sabemos quiénes son y como son ustedes.

³⁷³ ¿Ven? Yaritza va a recibir un cuaderno porque cuando vienen a revisarlos van a ver que ella hace buen trabajo, bien ordenadito, buena letra, todo en orden. Pero Balfor, tu llenas tus cuadernos con esos dibujos y no vas a recibir otro cuaderno. Tus padres tendrán que pagar para los otros porque no trabajas y no estudias. Cuando ven los otros cuadernos, van a ver quién más no trabaja.

³⁷⁴ ¿Ven? Ella elije estar aquí. Ella quiere estar aquí. Ella quiere trabajar con ustedes, quien sabe porque. Ella quiere ayudarles aun si no quieren su ayuda. Entonces, eso significa que van a comportarse bien, ¿verdad? Las dos queremos enseñarles cosas, leer y escribir, hacer números, y cuando se comportan bien todo sale bien. Pero

Liria and Fausto used punitive punishment the least of all teachers. They resorted to multiple scoldings throughout the day. They had the longer “behavior talks” at the beginning of the school day and Liria usually had a second one after recess. By July of each year, Liria threatened to leave the school early each day after recess or to send the students home with the message that they had been misbehaving. Some students would begin to focus for a few minutes, while several remained undeterred. When I asked why she never followed through, to turn what had become an empty threat into an action – or to stop saying it altogether – she was amazed at my question. “That would be terrible!” she said. “I could never do that.”

All of the above with support from family and a modicum of caring. I watched a behavior transformation in 2013 among a group of five boys who had been regularly and at times seriously problematic in Regalia’s classroom the previous year. Two had been accused of sexual assault (in the classroom) and three fought daily. When they became Fausto’s students, they went from “out of control” and “insolent” to more mature, respectful and even quiet, focused. Ramón, who had never learned to read, began to read in Fausto’s fifth grade. Fausto mentioned his work with Ramón and several others in our interview.

I have to take up some content again where my students have deficiencies, where I am not convinced in the learning...In fifth grade, particularly, the problem with them is that their learning is not for fifth grade...With some students, I’m teaching them to read. Because they don’t read. With others, to write.³⁷⁵

When talking with one of the boy’s aunts, I marveled about how drastically her nephew’s behaviors changed from 2012 to 2013. I told her that her nephew told me “Now I like going to school. I like to learn,” and he attributed his newfound interest and focus to Profe Fausto. The Profe, he explained, “gets angry when we do something wrong but it’s almost always when we really do something wrong. He also takes time to give us advice. He tells us what he expects and he helps us. I am learning to read with him, something the other Profes did

cuando no, ella no tiene que seguir trabajando con ustedes. Quien querría seguir cuando son tan mal comportados? Hay días que no quiero venir y una vez acá hay momentos cuando yo quiero salir corriendo de aquí. Ustedes me dan dolor de cabeza todos los días con los gritos y las peleas y la insolencia y la necesidad. Cuando se comportan tan mal, ya no quiero estar aquí con ustedes. Pero tengo que quedarme, y ella no.

³⁷⁵ Tengo que retomar algunos contenidos que han de, que tienen lagunas todavía. Que están allí, no muy, no estamos allí, no estamos muy convencidos en el aprendizaje en lo que va. Entonces, son a veces contenidos que presentan dificultades de asimilación. Entonces, nosotros reforzamos para reforzar y tratar de irlo nivelando. En quinto grado, el problema de ellos es de que el aprendizaje de estos niños no es para quinto grado... Estoy a unos alumnos enseñándoles a leer. Porque no leen. A otros a escribir.

not do.” In previous years, he contrasted, “it was the same when we didn’t do anything bad and when we did” – he hit one hand against the other and made a loud slap – “right?” Regalia “yelled and threatened and hit, again and again. She locked us out of the classroom every day. She told us we would never learn, never behave well, never be someone in life. But the Profe [Fausto], no. He’s different.”

The aunt explained the boys’ changes differently: they were due to change in the boys’ families. Francisco’s mother had returned from the U.S. that same year with a new husband who gave his step-son advice and support. “He now has stability at home. Last year he lived with extended family who did not care for him.” Ramon’s turning point began after being caught smoking behind the school during class time and his grandmother gave him a whipping.

Just last month when they presented grades, he was failing two classes, math and Spanish. He was failing them. So the Profe sat him down and began to give him advice... but he (nephew) was going around with other kids, with Kenner, and Kenner smokes. The two of them left the classroom and smoked in the old school. So, one day, some of the kids came to me and told me... And I grabbed him and found a box of matches and half a pack of cigarettes in his pocket. So I said to him, “Look, Monchito. I’m going to tell my mother because if I don’t tell her it’s as if I am also doing the same thing you are doing.” And I told my mother. And my mother grabbed him and gave him a flogging with a leather whip (used on animals) that made him cry. The boy stopped hanging around with those other boys and he recuperated his classes. He’s not failing any classes anymore.”

The boys’ respective families, she assured me, had played key roles in correcting the two young boys’ anti-values behaviors. Fausto helped, but was secondary.

Fausto was the only teacher who consistently talked about and tried to teach his students manners. He disavowed all *palabrotas*, insults, vulgarities and other disrespect in his classroom. Other teachers said it was either too exhausting or impossible to do. They tended to ignore most student behaviors until it was impossible to continue ignoring them. That was when the floodgates opened and “the talk” turned into a rant. Both of Fausto’s colleagues scorned his success, insisting “it’s not that they respect him,” Regalia snorted. “They’re scared of him. Mortified. That’s not respect!” Some of the mothers agreed, but insisted the kids respected and were scared of him. “It seems that they are more scared of the Profe,” one

mother told me, laughing. “Because he is very serious, talks a lot and tells people off.”³⁷⁶

Fausto explained his commitment to his students that they learn to “respect authority and each other” and express “good manners,” what in Spanish is “*ser educado*” which literally translates as “being educated.” He taught the importance of manners in his School

Assembly and classroom talks which often were impassioned speeches like the one below.

You all make fun of everyone. No one and nothing escape your comments. You make fun of the old lady walking down the street in front of the school. You make fun of other classmates. You make fun of your parents and teachers. You use nicknames instead of your Christian names.

You don’t listen or pay attention. You never behave well, and you will never learn. That has to change. When you pass someone on the street, you don’t say hello. You don’t even see them. You just keep walking. You never say, “Good morning” or “Good afternoon.” Bad manners. And that does not come from here, from this school, no. Neither I nor las Profes teach you all those bad manners. That comes from your families.

I see moms and dads who leave the community to evangelize in other places, and they leave their kids alone at home. They don’t even evangelize you all. Are they embarrassed by their own family? Obviously they’re embarrassed.

But look, kids. Education is to change, to improve. You should not come to school and leave the same, stay the same, all the same. You should leave a better person. I go to the High School, and when I go, they tell me, “The only thing they have learned in El Roble is greet people, and that’s good.” And they’re right. That is good. I want you to at least greet people. To be educated. When I go to the High School I see students who studied here and I see how they have change. They have changed.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ Es que parece que al Profe le tienen más miedo (laughs). Porque el Profe es bien serio y (pause) hablón y regañón.

³⁷⁷ Ustedes hacen burla de todos y todas. Nadie ni nada escapa de sus comentarios. Hacen burla de la anciana caminando por la calle en frente de la escuela. Hacen burla de otros compañeros y compañeras de clase. Hacen burla de sus padres, de sus maestros y maestras. Usan apodos en vez de sus nombres Cristianos. No escuchan ni ponen atención. Nunca se comportan bien, y así nunca aprenden. Eso tiene que cambiar. Cuando pasan a alguien en la calle, no saludan. Ni los ven. Solo siguen caminando. Nunca dicen, “Buenos días” o “Buenas tardes.” Mala educación. Y eso no viene de acá, de esta escuela, no. Ni yo ni las Profes les enseñamos esas malas modalidades. Eso viene de la familia. Yo veo mamás y papas que salen de la comunidad a evangelizarse en otros lados, y dejan a sus chiguines solitos en casa. Ni les evangelizan a ustedes. Tienen pena de su propia familia? Obviamente tienen pena. Pero miren, chiguines. La educación es para cambiar, para mejorar. No debería venir a la escuela y salir igual, quedarse igual, de lo mismo. Deberías salir una mejor persona. Yo voy al Instituto, y cuando voy, me dicen, “La única cosa que han aprendido en la escuela El Roble es saludar. Y que bien.” Y tienen razón. Eso está bien. Yo quiero que por lo menos saluden a la gente. Que sean educados. Cuando voy al Instituto yo veo a los estudiantes que estudiaron aquí, y veo cómo han cambiado. Ya han cambiado.

Fausto repeated how if people said his students only learned manners – no academic content – that was fine with him. He did not mean this literally, but more, like values in general, that it was more important than simply academic content. For Fausto, a highly intelligent person academically, with lots of scientific knowledge and bad manners, was not desirable.

When Fausto's students described him, they mentioned how he listened and gave them advice. This was important to them. When they did something bad, he sat down and talked with them one on one. Parents held him in high regard, and many mentioned only him when we talked about the school and its teachers, as if he were the only teacher at the school. Fausto was a community and regional leader, a committed Sandinista who had demonstrated his commitment to Nicaragua through decades of work for societal change for those most in need. He was an older man with a lot of experience, respected as an elder in the community and the Sandinista Party. He also was powerful and believed his work in the community was an integral part of his work as a teacher. He complained that in his work with the community he was on his own, because his two colleagues “stayed at home” and “never get out into the community at all.”

Fausto used tough love with all his students while his colleagues tended to focus on a few, at most one half, of their students, either ignoring the others or constantly outing them publicly for their behaviors and low learning performances. His voice often barked out across the school grounds and into the community, from his classroom and from the outdoor platform where he stood during School Assembly under the Nicaraguan flag and above the students, teachers and any parents present. He threatened, cajoled, accused, condemned and pleaded for students to improve their behaviors, their approach, their interactions with teachers and each other. Through it all, he showed glimpses of caring under his tough exterior – and a fierce loyalty for students once they reached his grade.

Remember, *chiguínes*, don't hang out by the brooks. It is dangerous to be on their banks or crossing over them, particularly during the rains because they swell fast. They swell before you know it, and they sweep anyone away, adult, child, dog, anything, anyone. So be careful and don't go down to the brooks when it is raining. It is better to be warm inside the house anyway. If you listen to the radio, the government will tell us when it's most dangerous. Just stay away from them.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ Recuerdan, chiguínes. No juegan allá por las quebradas. Es peligroso estar allá por los lados o cruzándolas especialmente durante las lluvias porque crecen rápido.

When Ramón and Fernando (mentioned above) were unruly fourth graders with Regalia, Fausto used his platform at several School Assemblies first to accuse the two boys of pooping in the latrine that only had a urinal and then to announce that his 5th and 6th grade students would spy on all students going to the latrines every morning. The infractions continued (more below).

His two colleagues used his domineering presence to help with behavior management. During the first weeks of my teaching Ambrosia and Regalia's 1st to 4th graders (while we were still getting to know each and I was getting to know their names), I employed a three strikes policy: a student who committed three strikes returned to their regular teacher's classroom for the rest of the day. The following day, we began with a clean slate. A couple of times Regalia refused to receive a student. She ordered me to take the child to Fausto instead. This caused panic in each boy and desperate attempts to return to my class with unending promises of being on their best behavior. I took them to Fausto anyway. When classrooms got overly noisy, usually when the 5th/6th graders were taking a test, Fausto would suddenly appear at the door of the classroom, a larger than life apparition. If students did not notice him, they immediately fell when he yelled for everyone to be quiet. They remained quiet for some time after he left. In 2013, Fausto took responsibility in the School Assembly for four first to fourth grade students who disrupted Regalia and Ambrosia's classrooms most days. "I will keep them working in my classroom until we resolve this problem another way,"³⁷⁹ he announced.

Though punitive and emotional punishments, blame, accusations, and threats were preferred approaches to changing anti-values behaviors in classrooms, all teachers used one other method that looked and sounded eerily similar (and uniform) across classrooms: the advice talk known simply as "the talk." Principals used School Assemblies as a platform for the talk when all students and teachers were in grade and gender formation. Teachers gave similar advice talks each morning in their classrooms to their students. I explain this anti-values and classroom management strategy that all students argued, and some teachers agreed, was ineffective. Still, most teachers insisted it was necessary and helpful for some children. Many, like Pridi, told students she would not see the results as they would come to students when they were grown.

³⁷⁹ Yo los mantendré en mi aula hasta que resolvemos este problema de otra forma

One day you will be thankful for the advice I give you. This is not a scolding, even though you think it is. It is advice. When you get a job, you'll remember the things I've told you. When you have a family, you'll remember these things. When you are middle-age with twelve kids (the students burst out laughing), no, seriously, when someone here has their 12 kids, or 8, or 4, you will remember some of these things you've learned as guidance from the teacher. You will thank me when you are older, when I am not even there physically to thank. But you will thank me.

Behavior management methods replicated through the waterfall. MINED

officials used similar behavior management strategies along the waterfall as teachers used at the bottom: threats of punishment, public humiliation, blame, and condemning teachers for lack of motivation, attention and applying knowledge gained in PD. Local officials – usually nucleus coordinators – communicated veiled threats through tales of teacher misconduct in nearby regions: a teacher who put 100% achievement for all students; a teacher who used her planning books from last year rather than re-copy them; a teacher who was not present or an entire school closed without permission when the MINED arrived for a surprise visit; and so on. They would soften these critiques by saying things like, “it didn’t happen here” or “we don’t have that problem in our sector,” but the warning was evident. Teachers understood the message to not engage in those behaviors or risk being denounced publicly and getting a black mark in your file. Fausto explained the MINED evaluation of teachers, using grades in grade books.

The results are what give me evidence. One of the two. In classrooms where I see 20 students, and 60% fail, the case of the [San Jose] High School that registered 48% performance [pass rate]. Or schools that have 100%. I have to look at both. One for being too aggressive and the other for being too passive [laughs].³⁸⁰

The repeating stories also communicated that local MINED officials would find out who did not comply so it was best to comply to keep your job.

Officials also blamed teachers for abysmal student performance after each grading quarter. These sessions were usually softer than teacher blame of students, but still clear. Each Municipal Delegate gave a verbal semester report to a small group of teachers who were not nucleus facilitators, and who were tasked with the responsibility of providing

³⁸⁰ Los resultados son lo que me dan indicio. Una de dos. Aulas que yo miro de 20 alumnos, el 60% esta aplazado, caso del instituto, que llego a 48% del rendimiento. O escuelas que me tienen el 100%. A los dos las tengo que poner ojo. Uno por ser demasiado agresivo y el otro por ser demasiado pasivo.

highlights of the report to their nucleus colleagues. As seen below, the report-back on student learning remained general with unsubstantiated descriptive statistics.

In general, we are doing pretty well in academic performance. We are at 86, 87, 85 percent, somewhere around there. But when you look at this number more closely, you begin to see the challenges we face. The number is much lower in secondary. In secondary it goes down to 53%.^{lxxxviii} That is too low, the Delegate says. And when you look at it by content area in secondary, Language and Literature and Math are the lowest disciplines. Chemistry and Social Studies are low, too, but not as low as Language and Math. The worst is in seventh grade. Seventh grade is the lowest. In almost all content areas in seventh grade, [performance scores] are low. The *Delegada* says we have to address this problem and look at what contributes to this low academic achievement.

The brief report-back had been announced as an opportunity to analyze reasons for the low performance numbers to help teachers prepare their next month's plan and improve student performance. The Delegate had told teachers "to address this problem and look at what contributes to this low academic achievement." Still, there was no discussion about the abysmal statistics, the challenges students and teachers faced in elementary and high school learning, or how to address it in their planning. The silence reinforced beliefs that motivated teachers knew what to do, unmotivated teachers would not do anything even if ordered to change, and everyone should continue on their course complying with MINED orientations. The MINED – through its local officials – provided the discourse on improvement, change and innovation but did not allow the TEPCE time or space to have conversation about what that could mean in the San Jose sub-region. The MINED saw no reason to open this conversation. Some thought the MINED felt teachers were incapable of adapting the curriculum to support improved student learning; others cited how there was never any space to discuss challenges because the MINED only wanted loyal compliance to their strict orders and centralized functioning.^{lxxxix}

The report-back demonstrated how MINED officials used PD space to reinforce messages of teacher compliance and the importance of loyalty to its orientations. Unlike learning outcomes above which were general with incorrect numbers, when the Delegate touched on teacher behaviors she got specific and accusatory – and a tad vulgar.

The *Delegada* said we are not fulfilling our responsibilities as public servants with students, families and the communities. Another theme she raised was the importance of honesty. We have to be honest, she said, and many of us are not being honest. She says this has to change. For example, she talked about data teachers submit that is not

accurate, teachers saying they have planned when they have not, teachers teaching only two hours a day of classes and saying they are teaching a full day.

She raised another point that too many teachers are requesting too many leaves of absence [to not teach class for one day or more, usually due to health reasons]. Some teachers request a leave every week, she said. Too many leaves, she says, and we are not fulfilling our responsibility to be in the classroom with the students. Teachers are missing too many classes, and without permission. So they know the teacher is not doing his or her job, the *Delegada* says. In other words, they come [to visit schools] and find us urinating outside the pot, as we say in good Nicaraguan Spanish.

She said that in some visits they have even found the school closed, and with no permissions in place, expecting to visit the school and it is closed. She also said when they have arrived at some schools to supervise, they have found grade books in which the students all have 15: 15, 15, 15, 15... all have 15 on one test. She says obviously that is not possible. The teacher is not doing their job. They haven't done a test or they haven't taken the time to enter the grades correctly.

She says they have also found planning notebooks that are empty, and some teachers who refuse to provide their registers. So it is obvious, [the Delegate] says, that the teachers in these cases are lying. They are not doing their job. [The teacher paused, looking at her notes.] Oh. She also said she wanted to remind us that the librarian, assistant principal, principal [in high schools], all can give class. If a teacher cannot be present, they should fill in. She says, 'los chavalos' (kids) should not be left unattended (alone). "The kids are primordial," she says. So that's it for my report from the *Delegada*.

Teachers listened with little reaction on their faces. Some leaned into a colleague sitting next to them to whisper something, but for the most part they remained motionless and outwardly emotionless. Teacher reactions exploded later in evaluation and planning groups. The Delegate – their main rector or boss – had accused them of lying, of multiple dishonesties. According to teachers, dishonesty began at the top with corrupt officials and in the middle in state and municipal offices. The teachers felt enormous pressure from pedagogic advisors, they complained, who forced them to change grades – and thus lie – when they presented report cards that pedagogic advisors deemed as having “too many” kids failing or not passing one or more classes. They ordered teachers to change grades the teachers determined students had earned; that kind of lying was acceptable, but teachers who implemented automatic promotion on their own and passed all children with 100%, as in the Delegate's example, were publicly labeled liars and condemned for their actions.

The Municipal Delegate's report-back included many ongoing messages in PD: an official signal of acceptable and unacceptable teacher behaviors; the importance of compliance to MINED orientations; an attempt to enlist teachers to participate as "volunteers" in GRUN activities and GRUN objectives; and a reminder of potential consequences and punishments for lack of compliance or loyalty. The report-back was an official reprimand of teachers being dishonest, served to teachers by one of their own. With this method, officials left no space for discussion or conversation. It was a message from above to those below. When teachers rebelled against the messages, the messengers – usually facilitators – reminded their colleagues that they, too, were following orders from their superiors. In one such exchange, a visiting pedagogic advisor told teachers, "I agree, and I did not create it"³⁸¹ (the orientation or tight timeline).

The Delegate did not substantiate her accusations, similar to teachers not substantiating their accusations in the classroom against students. She focused on what she termed unacceptable teacher behaviors. Similar to the teachers' emphasis on blaming students for everything from not learning to getting hurt, MINED officials blamed teachers for most schooling ills with no self- or institutional evaluation or critique in their messaging. MINED officials blamed teachers for low student enrollment, low student learning, low student pass rates, low student graduation rates, high student repetition rates and high student drop-out rates. They blamed teachers for certain behaviors, like continuing to use rote, memoristic methods despite MINED calls to incorporate constructivism. Publicly, MINED officials focused on how they were doing their part. In schools and classrooms, teachers focused on how they were doing their part. Blame was usually outward, individualized and not systemic or institutional.

Only twice I heard facilitators publicly humiliate a teacher by name in front of her peers. Both times colleagues were furious, even though they agreed their colleague was at fault. Liria remembered their conversation.

They made those comments and I think later in a *diplomado* [session] we talked about the assessors, and we said that really it was not correct what they did, to go criticize someone in public. What do they accomplish? Nothing, just that, no one thinks about anything else. It is malice.³⁸²

³⁸¹ Estoy de acuerdo, y yo no lo diseñé.

³⁸² Hicieron esos comentarios, y después que hubo un, creo que era un diplomado que hablábamos de los asesores, porque en un diplomado hablábamos de los asesores y decíamos que realmente no era correcto lo que

Murella also remembered the pedagogic advisors talking about Profe Pelucita's refusal to remain at their school or leave her registers when they arrived for a surprise visit.

They said to us, "That Professor is stealing from the state, from the people. If she was going to work in a Factory, they would not pay her for that day of work. She is robbing from the state. And she cried. It's not a question of crying, it's a question of complying. And now it's two times. Two times in two years! So, if you have a family emergency or something and the supervisor comes, leave your plans. But she didn't. She took them and left, without saying a word." It was terrible.³⁸³

Compliance was a strong expectation and theme in all PD. Stories included details about what teachers should not do. Officials assumed that teachers all knew what they were meant to do.

Teaching values in an academic setting: Conflicting beliefs

Many classroom teachers wrestled with conflicting beliefs about teaching and learning academics and values. Academic content was taught through "giving information," transmission and rote learning. Students copied text that teachers copied from textbooks onto the classroom board; they went home to study their handwritten text and memorize it, to return and represent it as faithfully as possible on a written exam. Values, on the other hand, were learned through lived experiences and social learning, from family members and participation in activities or projects with others. Academic teaching relied on a combination of behaviorism and individual constructivism beliefs while values instruction was rooted in beliefs that values teaching and learning happened socially, as social learning in community. To complicate teacher decision-making about values education in their classrooms, when officials presented values education activities as political, many teachers responded by using their political identity and beliefs about *Orteguismo* to understand orientations and decide if and how to implement them.

The GRUN did not specify how it wanted teachers to teach values in the classroom. Most of its orientations were about GRUN projects in the community or projects that

ellos hacían, irlo a criticar a uno en público. ¿Qué ganan haciendo eso? Solo eso se cumple ese día, nadie piensa en otra cosa. Es malicia.

³⁸³ Nos dijeron, 'Esa Profesora está robando al estado, del mero pueblo. Si ella va a trabajar en la fábrica, y no produce, no le van a pagar ese día. Ella está robando al Estado. Y ella lloró. No es de llorar, es de cumplir. Y ya son dos veces. ¡Dos veces en dos años! Y aún, si tiene una emergencia familiar o algo y llegan a supervisor, mejor dejen los planes. Pero ella, no. Los andaba y se fue, sin mediar ni una palabra.' Era terrible.

straddled the school and community, with targeted participants most often being adult residents rather than elementary school children. School-based values activities with students and parents were clean-up campaigns on school grounds with parents and commemorations. This led to teachers not expressly teaching about the monthly values and relying on Sandinista principals to enact other projects and activities.

When teachers taught values in the classroom setting they used methods similar to how they taught other academic content: transmission. In conversation, they insisted that since values were different from academic content they were taught differently, but classroom instruction of values straddled both conceptions. Teachers named a value and urged students to put it into practice by changing their anti-values behaviors. According to Ambrosia, values were “something the students have to practice, to put into practice” but the greatest challenge teaching values was “that they put them into practice!” Regalia described her instruction of values as “talking, talking, talking” about them – “and still they don’t put them into practice,” she decried. Unlike academic content which relied on written texts, values content relied on talking, talking, talking. Values planning also differed from its academic counterpart. The latter involved many tiers of hand-copying MINED texts while values planning for the classroom involved writing a monthly values list into monthly plans, copying cross-curricular values pillars into both monthly and daily lesson plans, and giving students “the talk.”

Teachers separated their classroom values instruction from implementing MINED orientations, proceduralized lived experiences they chose whether or not to follow per instructions to involve students in nationally coordinated actions at their school (e.g., clean-up campaigns, patriotic commemorations). In contrast to the constantly changing verbal values curriculum of activities, teacher values instruction in classrooms remained a daily constant. Rather than being driven by the National Human Development Plan, values instruction in the classroom according to teachers was driven by challenges in behavior management – to change the anti-values behaviors students presented each day. The primary instructional method was “the talk” – during School Assemblies and daily in each classroom – which paralleled the talk parents gave when scolding children at home.

While many teachers, parents and MINED officials believed students came to school with “a blank slate” (Ambrosia) regarding academic subjects (i.e., reading, writing and

math), they just as vehemently argued that no child had a clean slate in terms of values or behaviors. The daily talk was geared to stem the tide of anti-values behavior children learned outside of school and brought onto school grounds. Though teacher scoldings showed no immediate positive effect, teachers swore they had benefited from talks given to them as students. Their students would benefit from their talks in the future.

“The talk.” All schools and teachers used “the talk” on a daily basis, and it was a common example teachers cited of values instruction they gave in the classroom. Every teacher provided similar advice to students to begin each school day (and sometimes one to four times more throughout the morning). They called out bad behavior, often talked about how the behavior negatively affected the teacher’s health, decried how students never changed, and finished by demanding (or cajoling) they change. The talk was values instruction because it helped students “prepare to go farther, to have a vision, to make goals, to strengthen the values part, the emotional part, all that,” Adriana explained. She described the teacher as being “like a potter, we are molding, molding the boys and girls in values. We orient them. And in that way we even influence the family.”

Teachers institutionalized the talk in School Assemblies when the school principal had the entire school – students and teachers – standing at attention in front of him or her. Each teacher practiced the talk at different points in the school day, usually at the beginning and whenever students got particularly out of control. I was struck each day by how the content and phrasing was similar across schools and how teacher and student perceptions of its effectiveness differed widely. The content of the talk underscored the belief that values and behaviors were intimately connected, and that misbehaved students acted on anti-values that had to change.

The talk during School Assembly. Every Monday and Friday morning, Fausto gave school-wide advice talks in the El Roble School Assembly. He stood on a small platform on the school’s front plot under a ripped blue and white Nicaraguan flag and railed against students and families, often calling them by name. He then told everyone they not only could do better, but had to do better. With every orientation and announcement he wove in values and stories of heroes and ordinary people fighting anti-values, good against evil, superhero against supervillain on a grand, national scale and right there in the community and in each family, in each individual person. He reached back into history while painting a bright future

vision in which his students were an active part. Students and teachers were his captive audience, with students lined up in front of him by grade and gender beginning with the preschoolers (boys then girls) on one side and ending with the 5th/6th graders (boys then girls) closest to the school's entranceway.

Fausto never prepared comments for his assembly talks. Like the side conversations in PD among teachers, Fausto's talks were stream of consciousness. In the July Assembly below, Fausto began by relating the death of two armored truck drivers who lost control of their vehicle avoiding a fourth grader who ran in front of their speeding bank truck. She crossed the nearby highway to catch an interstate bus home. Right after the accident, an ambulance took her to Managua in critical condition. She was fighting for her life. With this story, Fausto segued into a call on his students to take care of each other and the things around them.

Today in the morning, Fernando broke the school sign. Even the people who don't know how to read or write have the manners to know that they have to respect signs. They can see that sign and say, "I don't know what it says, but it surely says something important about the school." The children in this school, you all learn to read and write, but you have to learn to respect things that are not yours, too. You have to develop that kind of education or you will have a very sad life. The children that aren't educated and don't receive a good education do not last long in this life. Fernando is going to pay to replace the sign even though the sign was broken because he only knows how to destroy and that's not good. Man, take care of this school.

This is the best school around. Better than Los Coquitos, better than The Three Sisters. Look at that tree. Why would someone hang from the branch when it gives us shade? Why would someone hang on a branch until it breaks? Because [they know] only destruction. Care for the school and everything there is here. This school is not yours. It's not the teachers'. It is for all generations that come until it withstands. Take care of it. This community has lots of pretty things that you should take care of. Look behind us. You pass by that temple every day. I look at that temple and I think it is a beauty. It is a beauty that has nothing similar in this sector. No one else has anything like this temple. Just here in El Roble, you all. Not in Los Coquitos, not in the Three Sisters, not in Santa Cruz that is the capital of this sub-zone, of all the communities. You all have this beauty. And when I go to church, do you think I go to write on the walls? I don't go to write, "Pedro loves Maria" or some other vulgarity like you all write in the latrines. I don't go to rip the pages of the Bible, like you all do here. I don't go to do those things. So why do you all do them every day here?

(He holds up a book and shows it to the crowd of students. He holds it high, moving it from left to right. Then he brings it down to his chest and looks at it, as if he might open it and begin to read from it.) Here I have a book with very good literature. Very

good. What do you all do here with books in this school? Without interest ni reading the literature, without interest in knowing what it says, you all rip the pages, write on the page, you even throw the book and kick it around the entire school. Without reading it, without knowing what it has inside! (He is visibly angry again, with his face reddening as he raises his voice more and more. He stops, takes a breath, and then speaks in a normal tone, looking across at the kids in their lines.) Children, take care of what you have.

What Fausto did not tell his students was that after first grade in Los Coquitos, the little girl transferred to the region's only unigraude school. Her parents said Los Coquitos was too dangerous a classroom environment for her. Many parents told me they wanted to send their children to the unigraude school, but feared for their children's safety. The accident reinforced their fears.

Regalia led an Assembly in which she told students how their different behaviors – “you don't pay attention, you scream and yell, you fight all the time” – affected the teachers. “One feels despair. You get exasperated. It is a huge letdown, to push yourself so hard and the students don't respond.”³⁸⁴

I have gone into Profe Ambrosia's classroom and there are kids fighting, yelling, pushing each other, not paying any attention to the lesson, not doing the work. Some of those students I had last year. And when they get to fifth grade they say they can't do multiplication or division. But who is to blame for that? Who is to blame when the students don't do their homework? Who is to blame when the students don't pay attention?

I kill myself yelling at students to sit down and pay attention. I teach a lesson and the next day no one remembers what we did. Do you think that feels good? It is depressing. It is disappointing. One loses heart. The insolence. The lack of respect...

And another thing is the leaving the classroom to go the bathroom. Train your body. You don't see me leaving the classroom every little bit to go to the latrine. It's because I've trained my body. Not here. 'Profe!' To the latrine. 'Profe!' To the latrine. And those who go without asking, three, four, five times in a couple of hours. And then they stay away for a long time, groups of students supposedly in the latrine. Finally they come back to class and within a little bit, “Profe, I have to go to the latrine.”

And as a teacher you have to let the students go because you imagine that if you don't they will urinate in the classroom. It's not because you want to let them go. It's because you can't (pause). I have kids who do this (she crosses her right leg in front

³⁸⁴ Uno se desespera. Uno se desespera. Es una enorme decepción, forzarse tanto uno y que los estudiantes no responden.

of and top of the left leg, clutching at her crotch area), “Profe! Profe!” Of course I have to let them go.

And another thing is absences. Profe Ambrosia is absent because she is sick. She is never absent for any other reason. I hardly miss any classes. I’m sick but I hide it. I am still sick, but I don’t show it. I am in pain, but I come to school every day because I have to. But the students. There are students who miss entire weeks, or who leave early every day, or who come only when they feel like it.

You all are students, that’s why they call you students. Your parents have not put you to work, right? No, you come to school each day to learn and study. And that’s another thing. How many students don’t do their homework. I sometimes have one or two students from the entire class who come to school having done their homework. So then I have to dedicate time to that because no one did it at home. And then I get behind in what I had planned. And is that my fault? No, it is the students who get me behind.³⁸⁵

Before having the students sing the national anthem and National Literacy Crusade anthem, Regalia led the students in a prayer. She asked for help for Profe Francisca from the nearby Las Tres Hermanitas elementary school. Francisca, from our nucleus group of schools, fainted the previous Thursday while giving class and she was struggling to live. She had already submitted her retirement papers and was hoping to stop teaching in a few months.

In her talk, Regalia told the students that their behaviors had negative effects on her and her colleagues. She touched upon the main points teachers discussed in TEPCE planning meetings. She provided evaluation points teachers gave each month to explain why they achieved everything they planned (“100% completed) but students did not learn. The list included students not paying attention, not doing their work, being aggressive and being absent – during school hours and full school days. She talked about the disrespect teachers ignored and continued their work in spite of. She talked about what it felt like to be attacked verbally and questioned by students and parents who set “traps.” She talked about how hard she and her colleagues worked and how they got behind not because they did not work but because of student behaviors and attitudes.

The talk in each classroom. Teachers reiterated the messages “you will never learn” and “you come to school to play, not learn” during each classroom talk. They accused students and parents of specific anti-values from the past day or in general. Some days they focused on rights and responsibilities, complaining that students never fulfilled their

³⁸⁵ See Appendix E for Spanish

responsibilities but demanded their rights. In contrast, teachers fulfilled their responsibilities and ensured students' rights every day. "You cannot expect to have your rights respected if you do not fulfill your responsibilities," they reminded their captive audience. Sometimes teachers were very specific, while other times they began generally and then specified school and classroom rights and responsibilities. Liria gave the following talk in her classroom one day.

LIRIA: Let's talk rights and responsibilities. What are your responsibilities here in school?

STUDENT1: To do homework

STUDENT2: To listen to the teacher

LIRIA: To play, to recreate. Look at Jerson and Lisbet, they are the ones who pay the least attention. (Jerson: Hah!) And what about the right to life? That is one of the most important that no one can take away. And all children have the right to a name, to be fed, to a nationality, to education and health care. When you are sick, they take you to the Doctor. You enjoy those rights. Now let's look at responsibilities. What responsibilities do you all have?

STUDENT1: Respect those who are older.

STUDENT2: Respect your teachers.

STUDENT3: The responsibility to study

STUDENT1: The responsibility to help parents with chores at home.

LIRIA: And you all don't clean here. I am not your servant. But I have to clean every day here in the classroom, every morning. So just as we have rights we also have to fulfill our responsibilities. So, the government and others have to ensure our rights, but we have to fulfill our responsibilities. So do you say "bitch," "damn mother" or "what's her name" to you mother? No, mothers are unique. We only have one and we have to love them, take care of them. We have to help around the house, for the boys to help with planting and the girls washing the dishes. So just like we have to receive our rights, we have to fulfill our responsibilities.

She incorporated questions and answers in the above excerpt which was unusual, for her and everyone I observed. The talk was usually an exclusively teacher-focused affair.

Some days teachers used the talk to focus on their personal sacrifices and commitment to their students. Liria constantly told students and parents how late she stayed up at night planning for all four (2012) or six (2013) grades. "Sometimes I'm up until midnight, and now that we don't have electricity, I plan by candlelight." She also highlighted her early mornings.

I woke up today like every day, at 3:30 to bathe, prepare food for my family, and get everything together to leave my house by 6am to get to school before 7am. And I'm here every day before 7am. And some of you, especially those that live right here next door, are the ones who usually arrive the latest. The latest of everyone! You

can't even get here on time. And I get here early every day, even Wednesdays, when we have to walk.

The talk came out of students not immediately settling into their desks when a teacher told them to do so at the beginning of each day or after transitions, which occurred every 45 to 90 minutes. It was not always clear what teachers expected students to do, particularly when the teacher left the classroom with no assignment on the board. When Liria arrived at school, more than a handful of kids were waiting outside the gate. She opened the gate and the school door, walked across the room and put her bag and books on the table in the front of the room. She told one of the students to open all the windows, asked others to bring water from the well if she was going to mop, and then she swept the classroom floor and corridor. When she finished, she went to talk to a neighbor who gave her coffee over the school fence. When she returned 30-45 minutes later, the students were playing and rough-housing inside the classroom. "When I walk into this classroom, that's when class begins," she yelled. "I arrive here every day before 7am. When I tell you to sit in your seat, you sit in your seat and you don't get out of it." The problem for many students was Liria told them at 7am to sit, then told them to help clean, and then left for an extended period without saying anything. All the teachers I observed expected to be able to leave the classroom for any amount of time and have children be on their best behavior on their own "as if I am here with you." When they returned to chaos, they all expressed anger at the students and meted out punishment.

Many teachers ended the talk by calling upon students to improve their behaviors from that day forward. This was a teacher's effort to encourage students to put values into practice.

FAUSTO: Ya no van a poder correr por todos lados. [He pauses and looks at all the students.] A veces Helen y yo estamos en el corredor diciéndoles que no corran, y no hacen caso. Ya no van a poder seguir así. ¿Qué deberíamos hacer?

AMBROSIA: [softly but out loud] Que los amarren.

FAUSTO: Kenner tendrá esa cicatriz en su cara por toda la vida. Toda su vida. Esto tiene que parar.

Fausto points back at Kenner who is last in line of the 3rd/4th graders. The students were playing the other day and Kenner fell, slicing his right cheek deeply on something. The gash was more than an inch long. It is very visible from where I'm standing on the other side of the 1st/2nd graders. Fausto doesn't mention Jonatan, who

had his face beaten in a few weeks ago by another student on school grounds around 7:15am. He then segued into one of his ongoing topics: the person or people who were pooping in the latrine that had only a urinal, creating an enormous mess almost every day. He used it as a teaching moment filled with accusations and threats at the same time.

FAUSTO: Tenemos varias letrinas en esta escuela. La última letrina tiene un orinario (urinal). Es para el uso exclusivo de los muchachos porque los muchachos pueden orinar parados. Las muchachas no tienen una porque no pueden orinar paradas; tienen que sentarse. [He raises his voice, loudly.] NO ES PARA DEFECAR. No es para defecar esa última letrina, y aun así alguien está defecando allá. Tenemos unos ZANGANOS aquí...

[His face has turned beet red.] Everyone has to pass by my classroom on their way to the bathroom, so we all know who is going to the bathroom. We will have spies in the 5th/6th grade classroom who will follow all the boys who go to the bathroom. We think we know who is doing this zanganada, but we will confirm it. And once we confirm who it is, that person will clean it up by himself with NO HELP FROM ANYONE. And there will be more consequences than that, too. We will find out who is doing this, and it will stop.

REGALIA: [She raises her voice to match his.] ¡Profesor! Kenner and Fernando dicen que no eran ellos, que no te dijeron el otro día porque estabas tan enojado que no los hubieras escuchado. Ellos dicen que no eran ellos.

FAUSTO: [Shrugs.] We know who they are. We will catch them.

REGALIA: They say it's not them. They insist it's not them. It has to be someone else.

One day when I had Regalia's 4th grade class apart from the rest, a boy told me in confidence that two first grade girls from Ambrosia's class were pooping in the urinal. I went to Fausto worried that he and Ambrosia would show little mercy. Fausto had two 5th grade girls take water for the two little girls to clean their mess and both professors talked with them about not continuing their morning ritual.

Student perceptions of the talk. Students characterized these talks as scoldings they usually did not deserve and that they zoned out. They deserved the scolding "only when we misbehave," two fifth graders told me. When they didn't feel they deserved the scolding, they either didn't listen or at times disagreed and expressed their anger. The talks were uniform in messages, phrasings and content focus. Apparently group scoldings by teachers in high school intensified in length and number of threats because several El Roble students complained about the amount of time their seventh grade teachers scolded them instead of

teaching: “it’s a waste of time and we don’t even listen to them, we don’t take them into account.”³⁸⁶

All teachers referred to their history of being a student and their teachers giving them “the same advice,” alluding to how they had heard “the talk” many times during their 1-11 grade careers as students. Many teachers said things like, “Even though you might feel like I am scolding you, I’m not. Believe me. I am giving you advice, advice you will be thankful for having received in the coming years. I was.” Liria and others often corrected themselves with me, initially calling the talk a scolding to walk it back and say, “not really a scolding” and “it’s really advice.”

But the talk’s redundancy – every day and even several times a day – affected student attention and meaning. After sitting through up to twenty minutes of the same scoldings – that the students were doing nothing, never listened, never paid attention, never learned and would fail the entire year – students stopped listening. Towards the beginning of the school year, most students looked at the teacher while she talked and yelled. By May, most looked elsewhere, anywhere but at the teacher. Many drew in their notebooks, passed notes in pairs or small groups, talked quietly or looked down, around or out the windows. Several got up out of their desks and began to walk around the classroom, quietly looking for something to do.

Threats during the talk held little weight. Since most students still received grades based on their exam results, teachers’ threats to take points away for bad behavior rang hollow. And since teachers were most consistent in not following through on threats, most students learned to not take any threat too seriously. Threats to take away recess became ineffective rapidly as well. All students needed a physical break from the copy/dictation routine of the morning, and recess provided that break. It provided at least thirty minutes of unharnessed energy. Kids returned to class from recess red-faced and sweaty, some so physically tired they melted into their desks for the last hour of the school day. Even more particular to the multigrade environment, the most unruly students who brought the punishment onto all their classmates usually escaped and had recess with the other grades. Those who were punished and forced to stay inside their classroom with the teacher, sitting

³⁸⁶ Es una pérdida de tiempo y nosotros ni los escuchamos, ni los tomamos en cuenta

in their desks, were the better behaved – and this caused grumblings and resentment that they directed at their teacher.

Teachers often told students that no one was an angel in their classroom, which made the talk even more appropriate to them. This generalizing of misbehaviors across all students did not recognize the many levels of unruliness and disrespect. Perpetrators in some classrooms changed daily. Other classrooms had a persistent and consistent group of non-conformers and fighters. In some classrooms – like in Regalia, Reina and Emilia’s classrooms – virtually all students acted out during the day; there was little to no control and less mutual respect. With the talk, teachers tended to treat everyone the same – they were all infractors or potential infractors.

Some students identified how the talk at times was more for the teacher’s benefit than theirs. It served as a time and space for teachers to vent frustrations in that moment, frustrations that reached a boiling point at least once a day, and usually many more. Still, teachers insisted it wasn’t a scolding, though students perceived it as such and teachers slipped and called it such. “You can’t call it regaño,” Reina told Pridi in front of Pridi’s students one morning. “You have to call it consejos because otherwise they won’t listen and they get resentful. Imagine!” Many students told me they disliked the talks because teachers made it look like everyone was culpable when maybe only one or a few students were. “They should get mad and threaten only the ones who do something wrong, but they don’t do that. Most of the time, most of us don’t deserve those scoldings.”

Students identified the talk as a teacher reaching a breaking point and teachers agreed. After ignoring behaviors for hours or days, teachers punished one or two students suddenly, or the entire class, “after I put up with their bad behavior” and until they could not “be nice” anymore. “Even if they [parents] denounce me, I still have to stop certain behaviors,” Murella said. Students often got confused or rebelled when a teacher enforced a consequence many days or weeks after a certain behavior. The consequence seemed to come out of the blue and felt unjust, students and parents complained. Sometimes after teachers followed through on consequences, they reneged on a non-punitive punishment (i.e., lowering a grade) if a student or parent pushed back hard enough. Teachers did not understand how the combination of ignoring behaviors with inconsistent and often distal punishments to a minority of infractors contributed to student misbehaviors.

Disadvantages and inefficiencies of the talk. Though the talk fell in line with GRUN values and teacher knowledge, there were many problems with how it was implemented. No one analyzed how much of student misbehavior was related to the rhythm of the school day, the relevance of the content, the expectations teachers had of children, how children were provided access to knowledge, skills and materials, or a number of other teaching and learning related issues. In addition, teacher-student relationships and interactions were fraught with conflict. This affected a teacher's authority and moral standing to provide advice to students. Those who were most successful were those who showed their caring. Most teachers had favorites for whom this worked, and who said the general talks were not for them.

The content of the talk rarely provided students with information about what teachers expected them to do. It usually focused on the many things teachers said students did not do or things they did wrong. Teachers and MINED officials never analyzed why students misbehaved or failed classes, so the repetitive talk could not help students figure out how to study or learn, not forget, or pay attention. The kinds of behavior challenges teachers faced in every school every day were far removed from the GRUN values education efforts. They had nothing to do with helping adults and families benefit from or participate in government programs. Most had to do with "being educated" or well-mannered, which to the teachers meant helping students live values in daily interactions in and out of the classroom. "If I teach them nothing but manners, to greet people on the street and treat neighbors with respect, I've done my job," Fausto concluded many conversations about his students. There was an enormous disconnect between the GRUN's almost singular emphasis on its values and values enactment through massive participation in its programs and the teachers' almost singular emphasis on children learning expected school behaviors in the classroom, like paying attention, studying, learning, respecting the teacher and each other – not playing, rough-housing, bothering and insulting others, stealing, or being aggressive.

The talk in professional development. MINED officials gave different versions of the to teachers in PD. It was institutionalized as a social learning activity at the beginning of every PD when a facilitator read aloud an inspirational reflection, a text chosen by top MINED officials, and asked for comments from the teachers present. Though the text did not necessarily contain the same content as "the talk," teacher reflections often reiterated the

talks' messages: teachers were not doing their job like they should, they were not motivated and needed to find their motivation to teach well, God or Jehovah could lend a hand as always, teachers were not fair to their students and had to remember that they were struggling in life, and so on.

Like principals at Assembly and teachers in the classrooms, nucleus facilitators also scolded teachers for bad behaviors and issued veiled threats through stories of unnamed teachers who fell out of compliance with orientations (see above). They pleaded with teachers to act on their values, to change their attitudes, to do more – and improve student learning. Like the classroom talk, there were few specifics and no pedagogical or other guidance.

MINED officials also publicly defined PD spaces as a space for the MINED to change teacher attitudes. Adriana and Fausto, both facilitators, made this clear. “The *diplomado*, I think, has that objective, to change the attitude of teachers nationally.”³⁸⁷ Ambrosia and Pelucita, as third tier participants, also made this clear, though they described it in terms of politicization (see below).

Preparing students for a school competition: Profe Emilia. In some schooling contexts, teachers blurred the line they usually drew between academics and values teaching and learning. Emilia once provided “conceptual definitions” of values on the basis of an NGO document she copied onto the board for her students to copy and study at home, teaching just as she did all her academic content. The MINED organized school competitions around certain values. Though these were a holdover from Somoza times when the dictator identified top students from schools around the country, the Ortega government re-designed them to organize youth into one of five Sandinista Youth organizations via values education (and what opposition parties termed indoctrination). Officials organized history competitions explicitly “to strengthen and inculcate patriotic values”³⁸⁸ (MINED INFORMA, September 13, 2013) or “rescue and promote values of national identity and culture” (MINED INFORMA, September 2, 2013). Environmental competitions promoted “values of respect, solidarity, team work and love of Mother Earth” (MINED INFORMA, August 27, 2013). The teaching-learning methods were the same as teaching academic or “scientific” content.

³⁸⁷ Incluso, el diplomado yo pienso que tiene ese objetivo, el cambio de actitud de los maestros a nivel nacional.

³⁸⁸ Fortalecer e inculcar valores patrióticos

Teachers provided students with question and answer sheets to memorize. At competitions, students answered verbally or in writing the same questions they had studied beforehand. Some teachers claimed the outcomes were different. “The boys don’t just memorize the list of questions. They are redacting, reflecting and above all putting tolerance into practice through healthy competition,”³⁸⁹ one teacher explained (MINED INFORMA, September 13, 2013).

Participating youth spoke of a personal transformation that occurred through their participation in the competitions. A MINED article paraphrased one young high school student who underscored how “thanks to this competition he had deepened his learning in historical facts that transformed the country and at the same time her recognized true love of country and defense of sovereignty” (MINED INFORMA, September 13, 2013). Another student characterized her transformation as motivational to join Sandinista efforts. “This motivates us to work more for our country, because the times have changed but support of the homeland is required, making or supporting social programs of the Government, in addition to being good students, we are willing” (MINED INFORMA, September 13, 2013) to participate in social programs.

Though MINED officials publicly touted these competitions as national (i.e., every school participated), none of the San Jose multigrade schools founded leagues or prepared one student to participate.^{xc} Instead, the MINED contracted a local NGO to help teachers choose one child from each grade to participate in a 1-day annual competition among neighboring schools. “Our kids don’t get to the municipal level. They can’t compete against the urban kids,” a teacher explained. “They’d get trounced. Let’s not even talk about state or national levels! So we participate in these small competitions.”

In 2012, to prepare for the local competition among seven neighboring multigrade schools, a local NGO promoter gave teachers information sheets to practice with their students to prepare them to win.^{xci} Profe Emilia copied the NGO’s values and definitions onto the board for all her students to copy into their notebooks (see Appendix D for full text). As she copied the definitions onto the blackboard, she turned to the class several times. All but one of those times she yelled at a child to get in his seat, at a group of boys to get back

³⁸⁹ Los muchachos no solo memorizan el cuestionario de preguntas, sino que están redactando, reflexionando y sobre todo, poniendo en práctica la tolerancia a través de la sana competencia.

inside the classroom, at a group of girls to stop talking. When she finished copying the definition of environment which ended with the word “man” (line 17), she turned to ask the class, “And why created by man?” No one answered. She waited a few seconds. “Because man plants trees and cuts trees.”³⁹⁰ This was one of the most common teacher questioning interactions: teachers asked a question, waited briefly, and answered their own question.

As Emilia finished copying the answer to justice on the board (lines 36-37), a girl asked what the answer was for honesty. “What is honesty?” Emilia asked the class. No one answered. Emilia looked around the room. “It is a person who doesn’t touch what isn’t theirs.”³⁹¹ This was different from the two-word answer she had copied on the board as the answer: “decent person” (line 30). She paused. “What else?” A boy ran in front of her, leapt into the air and yelled out, “RESPECT!” Without stopping, he ran to the back of the class and out the door. “Yes, respect,” Emilia continued, directing her gaze at the students in front of her and not the five boys rough-housing in the back of the classroom or another group of boys outside. “It is a person who does not touch what isn’t theirs.” She repeated her original definition. No student answered Emilia’s question, “What else?” by reading the answer from the board: “decent person.” If asked the question, “What is honesty?” at the competition, the person who answered “decent person” would win. The person who answered “It is a person who doesn’t touch what isn’t theirs” would lose. But in the classroom, answering with “decent person” could be seen as contradicting the teacher.

The definitions of the fourteen values varied in content. The three for respect, honesty and justice described results in relation to “what belongs” (line 37) to a person and “to achieve what we want” (line 46). Three other definitions used the word each was defining. Some definitions were confusing, like equality being an “agreement or conformity of a thing without separation” (line 40). Citizenship was a place, “the community where we live” (line 20), hinting at *convivencia* or living in community. Other definitions were vague or could apply to several values, like “Customs” as “habits acquired through constant repetition” (line 27) or “Honesty” as “decent person” (line 30).

Copying partial and often minimal “conceptual” or “theoretical” definitions normalized the transmission of knowledge gaps. The curriculum and teachers presented the

³⁹⁰ ¿Y por qué creado por el hombre? Porque es el hombre que siembra los árboles y corta los árboles.

³⁹¹ ¿Qué es ser honesto? Es una persona que no toca lo ajeno.

definitions as standing on their own, sufficient for each child's learning. There was no conversation or discussion about possible meanings. Very rarely did teachers provide examples and never non-examples or what fell outside each concept's purview. Each definition's sparse redaction – usually one or two sentences – raised more questions than answers in most cases. All were inadequate in explaining the complexity of concepts, particularly abstract and cultural ones like respect and justice.

Students often copied content inaccurately or incompletely. Teachers rarely checked for this, formalizing the inaccuracies. A 4th grade boy, Osman, copied the definition of “traditions” word for word until “*una generación*” (lines 33-34) which he followed with the word, “hauotra.” When I asked him what hauotra meant, he shrugged and continued copying the definition for justice. He wanted to finish the assignment. On the board, Emilia had written “a otra,” two words without the letters “h” and “u” Osman added on his copy. When I told Osman it was “a otra” he looked back at what he had written, nodded, looked at me, and returned to copying the definition for justice. His word “hauotra” that he told me he did not know remained in his notebook. He fulfilled the assignment. Emilia did not check his writing for accuracy. If he learned the information he copied into his notebook and presented it on the exam, he would not pass.

Students regularly copied information incorrectly by copying what teachers transmitted incorrectly, formalizing inaccuracies in a different way. Teachers insisted it was each student's responsibility beginning in first grade to copy correctly and they did not take responsibility for their own errors. In her values definitions lesson, Emilia wrote more than 35 spelling, grammar and punctuation errors (in 14 definitions). She consistently left out upside down question marks, capital letters and periods, and all accents. Students dutifully copied these errors. Emilia, and all teachers, told students every day several times a day, “Remember the capital letter,” “Put the period,” “And with good handwriting!” and “Accentuate *aguda* and *grave* words correctly.” In a lesson in which Ambrosia put second graders to copy a three stanza poem to practice the letter ñ and its five related syllables (ña- ñe- ñi- ño- ñu), she copied the word meñique (pinky finger) as menique with the letter n instead of the ñ. Menique is not a word, in writing or verbally. When students took their copied work to her, she chastised them for not writing meñique correctly. An excerpt from my field notes is below.

“Meñique,” Ambrosia says to Leonela, looking up at her from the desk. “What’s missing?” Leonela doesn’t answer. Ambrosia writes the accent above the n in *menique* in Leonela’s notebook. She continues to read and finds another word she miswrote on the board. “Em – pe – zo” she reads without any accentuation, just as she wrote it on the board. “It’s not *empezo*, it’s *empezó*.” She writes an accent on the final “o” in Leonela’s text. Ambrosia does not change her errors in the text on the board. She turns to Leonela. “Put more space and be careful with the letters that have the sticks that go above the line and those that have the tails that go below.” She hands the notebook back to Leonela and looks at the notebook of the next child in line. With the teacher checking and correcting her work, Leonela has finished the assignment. She runs off to play.³⁹²

After looking over at the board, Ambrosia did not correct the text she wrote from which the students copied. She did not correct everyone’s work, so some copied the text incorrectly.

In practice, teachers regularly modeled that basic grammar, punctuation and spelling were critical in written communication in language arts class and not anywhere else (more on this in separate article on language arts teaching and learning). Spelling phonetically (and incorrectly) was common on the street and among the majority of the adult population, including among teachers. The issue was so prevalent that Profe Reina asked me to help Emilia and Pridi with their spelling, grammar and punctuation. “Correct them in class when you visit them and help grade their students’ spelling and language arts exams,” she told me. “They need lots of help in spelling and grammar, punctuation, just about everything. I don’t have those problems,” she confided, “because I can spell and write well.”

Teachers did not have great models either. Most of the MINED’s written documents were littered with misspellings, run-on sentences and numerous punctuation and grammar errors on every page. Murillo accentuated each important word in written documents with a capital letter. This waterfall of errors, and lack of attention to putting schooling knowledge of grammar and punctuation into practice, contributed to wide gaps in knowledge and usage.

Presenting values definitions in a values assembly: Profe Liria. After creating her “Live Pretty” plan, Liria held monthly values assemblies with parents and students. It was a radical idea in at least two ways: its explicit theme was values and it included students, something no other school I knew did. Each month on the morning of the assembly, Liria expressed her fears to me on the bus and during our walk to school. She feared being

³⁹² Menique. ¿Qué le falta? No es em-pe-zo. Es em-pe-zó. Pone más espacio y tengas cuidado con las letras que tienen los palitos que van arriba de la línea y las que tienen las colas que van debajo.

punished because “it isn’t in the national plan. Maybe I should cancel it. What if they show up? They’ll think it’s bad, they’ll say I’m not doing my job, they’ll write me up.” As we walked from the bus stop to the school, she regained her confidence. “I already convoked it. The moms will support me if they [pedagogic advisors] come and ask what I’m doing, or scold me.” After the first Assembly, she decided to hold them bimonthly.

For the first “Live Pretty” values assembly, Liria decided to have students present values definitions to the mothers present. She had them prepare in the same way she taught academic content: they were to copy the conceptual definitions from a textbook. Because they were the older students, she also wanted them to practice presenting the text aloud in front of the mothers. This was common in other schools. Every month, Pridi and Fausto had their 5th and 6th graders do presentations standing in front of their classmates, reading aloud the same text they had each copied from the same textbook, practicing posture, voice control and nerves. Liria decided she could also explain it under the content listing, “‘Conversation norms’ or something.”³⁹³

The morning of the first assembly, she gave her 4th, 5th and 6th grade students a copy of the 3rd grade *Convivencia* and Civics textbooks to look up the one value she assigned: equality of opportunities, *compañerismo*, sincerity, perseverance, honesty, good manners, good behavior, and truth. “You will present the value in assembly this morning,”³⁹⁴ she told them, and turned to give the lower grades their lesson. At the assembly, most of the students read aloud the one or two sentences they copied from the textbook on their assigned value. Presentations were difficult to hear because students had difficulty reading their handwriting, stumbled over words, and interjected long pauses as they read their definitions. Four spoke so softly it was impossible to hear most or all of what they said. The first few held the paper high in front of their faces so they could not see the audience and the audience could not see them. A fifth grader gave the longest definition, telling the group that his value, equality of opportunity, meant “No man is better than a woman,” that “we learn more that way and it helps all Nicaragua” because “we have equality of personality and work...to push the country forward and eradicate poverty.” Another sixth grader defined sincerity as “always saying the truth to stay well with your family and achieve the love of your parents.” Honesty

³⁹³ ‘Normas de conversación,’ algo así

³⁹⁴ Ustedes van a presentar el valor en la Asamblea hoy día

was “saying the truth but not mistreating or fooling others.” One student could not read a word he had written, and two refused to participate. They stood in front of the blackboard and looked down at the floor as Liria first encouraged, then yelled, then cajoled sternly. They returned to their seats when she called the next person.

The following day in class, Liria was furious. She chastised the students for having done “minimal” and “very bad work” in their preparation, for being “paralyzed” when called upon to speak, for not being able to read their own handwriting, and for only looking at their piece of paper and not the audience when speaking. “This is why parents say we don’t teach you anything!” she bellowed. “Sometimes we couldn’t even see your faces! It was awful. I was embarrassed. I do my part, I put everything into you all and you all don’t do anything!” She made fun of several of the shyest students, mimicking their performances with oversized gestures, fake crying, and her whole body trembling. She finished the tirade telling them, “I will never do that again. Never!”

Liria continued the bi-monthly values assemblies with everyone present but never asked students to present information again. She took no responsibility for the last-minute student preparation in which she simply assigned them a value and told them to present it. She gave no further instructions, guidance or help. The students did what they knew with little support, and were blamed for their poor performance – in the classroom. In the TEPCE that month, Liria presented the experience to her colleagues in a completely different light. She applauded herself and her students for the excellent presentations they had done. “The values assembly was a success beyond my expectations, and the parents loved it,” she gushed. “If anyone wants to try it, I can tell you more.” Before anyone said anything, Reina shared a story about two first graders who learned to read finally.

My little Brayan is in first grade for the third year in a row. And nothing! When he first came, he couldn’t even hold a pencil – that took months. He didn’t know any colors – and still doesn’t. His head is like a rock, nothing gets in! But this month, he actually read what I put on the board.

This was also hyperbole. Brayan’s buddies read the sentence first making it difficult to know how much he had “read” from the board that day. Sharing successes – no matter how inflated – was an objective of each TEPCE and something officials told teachers to do during “the evaluation moment” (one of three “moments” each session).

Later in the year, Mama Blanca expressed appreciation for the values assembly presentations. “I have seen many ways now that methods have changed, and for me, [the students] experiment more, talk more, dialogue about a theme that they never would have done that.” She linked self-confidence with speaking up and not bowing your head to someone more powerful or intimidating. This was an enormous gain in schooling, to help children from a young age to speak in public, speak their mind, and “even comment with their friends, and sometimes point it out, ‘Look, that one doesn’t talk.’”

In El Roble, Steven’s grandmother cited speaking in public as an important skill children needed to learn in life, and one she told her grandson he could learn in school. She related a conversation she had about this after Steven, at 13 years old, dropped out of fourth grade.

I tell him, ‘Look,’ I say. You are going to get a job and the first thing they ask you,’ I say, ‘is if you know how to read, to what grade did you get,’ to give you a job. And if you don’t know, they won’t give it to you. In any job. All of that I explain to him. ‘You have to learn something,’ I tell him. ‘To be something,’ I say, ‘an engineer,’ I say, ‘something,’ I say, ‘so you will be...you will be prepared,’ I tell him. ‘A prepared boy,’ I tell him. ‘Wherever you go, you can speak freely,’ I tell him. ‘And that, without knowing anything,’ I tell him, ‘What are you going to do?’ I say to him. ‘You stay quiet when people speak to you because you don’t even know how to answer or anything.’³⁹⁵

Developing the confidence to speak to others was not a traditional school skill, mothers and teachers agreed. Still, it was something many rural families and the Sandinista government instilled as critical to equity and human development – a critical value.

Implement or Ignore Values Education Orientations: The Role of Political Party Identity.

A major influence on how teachers understood and implemented values education were their beliefs about Ortega, Murillo, *Orteguismo*, and the Sandinista project in conjunction with their personal political party identity. Many of the GRUN’s values orientations espoused beliefs that were overtly part of a revolutionary change that explicitly

³⁹⁵ Yo le digo, ‘Mira,’ le digo. ‘Vas a un empleo o un trabajo y lo primero que te pide,’ le digo, ‘que si sabe leer, que hasta qué grado llegaste,’ ah-ja, para darte un trabajo. Y si no lo sabes, no te lo dan. En cualquier trabajo que sea. Todo eso le explico a él. ‘Vos tenés que aprender algo,’ le digo yo. ‘Ser algo,’ le digo, ‘ingeniero,’ le digo, ‘algo,’ le digo, ‘para que sea...’ ‘Seas preparado,’ le digo yo. ‘Un niño preparado,’ le digo yo. ‘Donde quieras vos, puedes hablar despojadamente,’ le digo. ‘Y así sin saber nada,’ le digo, ‘¿Qué, qué va, qué vas a hacer?’ le digo. ‘Vos te quedas quedito cuando la gente te habla porque no sabes ni cómo va a contestar ni nada.’

promoted the Sandinista Party. Some orientations introduced radical life changes, like Murillo's emphasis on women's rights, gender equality, individual sovereignty for women, and ending domestic violence and gender abuse. Though these and other beliefs – including changes in child-rearing practices – could never be apolitical but could be non-partisan, Ortega's "good government" touted them as highly partisan and political. They were examples of how his government differed completely from all others. Sometimes people contested or outright rejected the content of the values or beliefs, while others contested and outright rejected their politicization, or the method by which the GRUN used them to gain political support. This was complicated by a Latin American – and Nicaraguan – tendency for people to hold strong, stable beliefs regarding their political party identity. The greater their participation in politics, the deeper their political identities and beliefs grew over time and the more they intersected with and influenced other belief systems. Hence, teachers' political belief systems often came to bear on how teachers understood values education orientations and chose if and how to implement each one.

Officials infused Sandinista Party identity into all its values mandates. This infusion along with the enormous role Murillo personally played in education guided many teachers to use their own beliefs about *Orteguismo* and Murillo to help them understand values orientations and decide on how to act upon them, ignore them or loudly boycott them. I look at the role of this outsized belief system in the following section.

Political Party Identity and Beliefs. Political party identity was important in public and private life in multiple ways. For many Nicaraguans from all walks of life, their political identity was parallel in importance to their Christian beliefs and their patriotism for their homeland. Political party "militants" and many "sympathizers" cited their party affiliation as part of who they were, how they thought, what they believed, who they lived and worked with, how they talked and acted, and what their future aspirations were (Wilm, 2011). One central aspect of contrarianism was "the piñata" of jobs and positions incoming leaders offered as tangible rewards to party donors, members and supporters. Ortega magnified this tradition by extending "positions of trust" beyond what had been the norm.

Members of Ortega's Sandinista party received jobs, scholarships, passing grades and entry into specialized schools according to their proven record as Ortega loyalists, level of sacrifice, and faithful support. Though Profe Pelucita was a local Sandinista neighborhood

committee member, “I can never get a job as a pedagogic advisor because I’m not high enough up” in leadership, she explained. Even though her bachelor’s degree in early childhood education could be an unusual advantage to the Municipal offices, she said the Delegate did not perceive it that way. “They don’t really care about that too much. It’s all about your political commitment and experience with the party.”

One has to assume commitments. And as a [Sandinista] militant, assume commitments means not to betray my [political] party, its principles and statutes. And independent of whether I agree or I realize that I am (pause), because imagine how it would be if the model was this way but I apply it as I see fit. No. Then, we are not good. It’s politics. That’s why I talk about commanders,^{xcii} intermediate commanders of the party, and institutions.³⁹⁶

Fausto proceeded to defined political *cuadros* as the rectors in education – the Delegates, pedagogic advisors and school principals – who “have to be under the magnifying glass of the party.”

Sandinista leaders agreed that ideally party militants and *cuadros* worked from political beliefs that “‘In a revolutionary country, all of us should struggle for conviction’ and not for conditions.” A tendency under Ortega was “‘Move, I’m taking that position for myself’... and sometimes people are named to return a favor, someone who worked with us as head of the campaign. Those favors affect us,”³⁹⁷ Fausto admitted. Though most people cited abuses in upper levels of leadership, militants and sympathizers received benefits for their political beliefs at every level (as part of political party functioning in all political parties). Under Ortega, community Cabinet members and Sandinista Youth received tangible benefits for their volunteer work. A mother affirmed that her work on the El Roble Cabinet ensured her kids would get scholarships to continue their education at the university level, something unheard of for most rural families before Ortega returned.

³⁹⁶ Tiene que asumir compromisos. Y como militante, asumir compromisos significa no traicionar yo mí, mi partido, los principios del partido y los estatutos. E independiente de que yo no esté de acuerdo y que me esté dando cuenta que yo estoy (pause), porque imagínese, como sería de que el modelo es este, ah no, pero yo lo voy a aplicar como yo pienso. No. Entonces, estamos mal. Es política. Yo por eso le hablo de los cuadros, de los cuadros intermedios del partido y de las instituciones.

³⁹⁷ ‘En un país revolucionario, todos debemos luchar por convicción, no por convicción, no por condiciones, ¿verdad? Muchos elementos que están ayudando, aportando al gobierno, pues, son gente muy capaz, muy comprometidos, por convicción. Y eso deberían hacer todos. No, ‘Quitáte vos, allí voy a ponerme yo.’ ¿Verdad?... A veces son personas nombradas porque hay que regresarle el favor, que anduvo trabajando con nosotros. ¿Verdad? Que fue el jefe de campaña, que fue el, el... entonces, esos favores a veces nos afecta.

There are benefits, as we say, as Cabinet members that they offer. There are scholarships for those who want to study any career. We seek out the young people that need a scholarship and we talk with them. Obviously, that can include our own children. We also approve entry into the Forestry Institute here, INTECFOR.³⁹⁸

She downplayed the political nature of their position. “Of politics, we don’t talk about that. People talk about benefits the government gives them.”³⁹⁹ She insisted that though benefits were limited, they were open to all. “Whoever wants to study a career says so, signs up, then, so they are given a scholarship. Yes. And those who do not want to study, it’s because they don’t want to, because there are scholarships.”⁴⁰⁰

This was an enormous change from previous governments – and parent experiences in schooling. One mother who got her education through sixth grade, explained.

People talk about benefits the government gives them because they government has brought many benefits. Before, we never received a notebook. When I studied in my time, NO ONE gave me a pen and a notebook to go to class. With difficulties, barefoot, we went to class with a little notebook or a piece of paper. And now, the children receive pens, their notebook, their books.⁴⁰¹

She insisted many times that “Now if they don’t study it’s because they don’t want to” because “the government has facilitated the education.

Free. And it offers shoes, the uniform. So I say, he who does not want to study it’s because he doesn’t want to. Before school was paid for and the poor didn’t have access to the University because we were poor and we didn’t have the resources to go. Because it was expensive. Not anymore. Now, if one wants to go to the university they even facilitate it, with the half scholarship so one can go. One has access to the university. And I like that because, I tell [my children], ease to study, for an education. And whoever does not want to study, it’s because they don’t want to study.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ Se necesitan calificaciones pero también hay beneficios como dice nosotros como gabinete, nos ofrecen... hay beca para los que quiere estudiar cualquier carrera, pero... Si pero a nosotros nos dicen o sea que busquemos los jóvenes que necesitan beca. Nosotros hablamos con ellos. Obviamente, eso puede incluir a nuestros chigüines. Nosotros también aprobamos entradas a Instituto Forestal aquí, INTECFOR.

³⁹⁹ Pero yo, yo de política, no hablamos. Lo que sí se habla es de beneficios que el gobierno les da.

⁴⁰⁰ El que quiera estudiar tal carrera, se le dice, se apunta, pues, para que se den su beca. Sí. Y el que no quiere estudiar, como le digo, es porque no quiere, pero becas sí, si hay.

⁴⁰¹ La gente habla de beneficios que el gobierno les da porque el gobierno ha traído muchos beneficios. Antes nosotros no recibíamos un cuaderno. Cuando yo en mi época estudie, NADIE me regalaba un lápiz y un cuaderno para que viniera a clase. Con dificultades descalzos, veníamos a clase con, con un cuadernito, verdad, o un con una hoja (claps hands together)... Y ahora los niños reciben sus lápices, su cuaderno, sus libros. Ya si ellos no estudian es porque no quieren. Pero el gobierno ha facilitado la educación.

⁴⁰² Gratuita. Y tiene su beneficio porque hasta zapatos les regalan para que, verdad, su uniforme, su zapato. Le digo yo, el que no quiere estudiar es porque no quiere. Antes se pagaba y los pobres no tenían acceso a la Universidad porque éramos pobres y no teníamos recursos para ir a la universidad. Porque era cara. Y ahora no. Ahora sí, si uno quiere ir a la universidad hasta les facilitan..., este..., con la media beca (claps hands together).

In addition to tangible benefits like jobs and scholarships, a proven and longstanding Sandinista Party identity opened access to becoming a GRUN leader, like a MINED Delegate or pedagogic advisor along the waterfall (national, state or municipal levels) – or a school principal.

A neighbor who taught physics and math at a high school up the mountain explained how his principal was “designated by the government to be the principal solely for her political party affiliations, and her willingness to follow party lines.” These party lines or orders came from First Lady Murillo, and, “as Nicaraguans say, ‘she has her nose in everything.’” He complained loudly about automatic promotion and how his principal follows that policy to the letter. “So if I have a student who earns 20 points, she tells me to give him 60 to pass him. I am giving him 40 points! That’s a lot, it’s too much. But that’s what it means to be trustworthy under this government.”

He became a teacher “in a different time, under a different government” and was a principal in a different state for almost ten years until he was fired after Ortega gained power.

In 2007 when the Sandinistas came into power, the MINED told me I would have to step down. They put a woman teacher in my place who had never been a principal, but she was Sandinista. She lasted one month. She told me some months later that being principal was a thankless job. There were huge divisions among the teachers, political divisions, and she could not handle the pressure. Since then, they have had five principals. Currently, they have an interim principal while they look for someone permanently. It has to be a Sandinista.

He moved far away because he felt harassed by the Sandinista leadership in his municipality and school. At his new high school, he still felt harassed by his Sandinista principal.

Today she calls me into her office and says a mother came to her, furious. I asked her why. “Because you didn’t pass her son and her son has a medical record that says he needs to be resting for several months, so he can’t attend school.” I asked the principal what she told the mom. “I told her that I agreed with her, that the problem was the teacher, and that she had to talk with you about how to arrange her son’s grade.” Imagine, the principal says I am the problem. So the mom comes to me really mad, yelling at me about how I have to change the grade. [I asked him what he did.] First, I told her she had to breathe deeply, three times. [He demonstrates by breathing deeply three times] because I couldn’t understand her. Then I told her that I come to school Monday through Friday, that I am there every day. I told her that her son

Para que uno vaya a la universidad. Que tenga acceso a la universidad. Y eso me gusta porque...yo les digo a ellos, facilidad para el estudio, para la educación. Y el que no quiere estudiar (slaps her hands together), que no quiere estudiar.

comes maybe once a week, once every 15 days. When I am continuously evaluating the students, when a student misses that many days, how does that affect their ability to learn and my ability to evaluate their learning? I asked. I told her that the medical report provided justification for her son to rest, but not to miss school and still receive high grades.

He affirmed his belief that “the biggest obstacle” to exercising his profession was “the government.”

Those in government don’t understand the classroom. The Minister under President Bolaños, who was still minister at the beginning of this government, was an agronomist. The next Minister was a veterinarian. The previous Municipal [MINED] Head was not a teacher. The current one is, and she teaches at the university. They are all political appointees and most know very little about education and nothing about the [elementary or high school] classroom.

The Sandinista Municipal Delegate left her post in 2012 to become vice-mayor for the municipality. The previous Delegate had left for a higher Sandinista post as well. Municipal appointments often served as a stepping stone to hirer political ambitions within the party. The non-Sandinista teacher was against this tendency: “They need to leave decisions to teachers who understand the classroom,” he argued.

Sandinista Party identity opened access to becoming a new classroom teacher as part of an accelerated teacher preparation program offered exclusively to Sandinista Youth from remote rural communities, some of which “never have had a teacher” (MINED INFORMA, October 9, 2013). They lived at their respective Normal Schools for eight months of intensive teacher preparation “to return to their communities to teach, in the restoration of people’s rights..., and propel the quality of education and teaching” (MINED INFORMA, October 9, 2013) as accredited multigrade teachers, “taking their knowledge with them, to strengthen education” (MINED INFORMA, September 30, 2013). A state Delegate explained the significance of the latest group of accelerated teachers, named each year for the Anniversary of the 1979 Revolution.

The most significant thing about this new [34th Anniversary] contingent is that they are the same youth who will be leading education with teaching based in values. Those 87 young people [from her state] will allow that rural communities have their own teachers, with a revolutionary commitment to carry the bread of teaching to the children, with the hope of being forgers of economic and social development. (MINED INFORMA, September 30, 2013)

Teachers who embraced values education enthusiastically and tried to get their colleagues to join them often publicly identified as Sandinista. Sandinista-identified educators embraced the waterfall publicly and whatever role(s) the GRUN assigned them. They were dedicated to contributing to macro changes that took them out of the school and into the community because they knew those structural changes were necessary for more micro changes on the community, school and individual levels to take hold and root.

Principals were the local rector of Sandinista Party orientations. “The school principal is the Ministry,” Fausto explained.

He is the advisor, the administrator, inside his school. He is the one to problem-solve, because they put a principal to resolve problems. They’re not going to put someone in there to take problems to the Delegation. When I arrive at the Ministry of Education, I say, “I had this problem. I gave this resolution.” I don’t say, “I have this problem,” so we can see how to solve it. Why do they have me here? To ring the bell and nothing more? No. That’s not how it is... But not everyone functions that way... sometimes because they don’t know and sometimes want to live one more day, not have many problems. When you as rector do not have a solid team to problem-solve, the problems accumulate, they turn into a river, causing a cancer, and then they say, “there is no cure, there is nothing we can do” until it explodes, like war.⁴⁰³

One teacher described principals, particularly Sandinista principals, as “it’s like they convert into foremen or overseers”⁴⁰⁴ who abused their power over teachers and family.

Principals talked about their role to help *sensibilizar* teachers in their schools while ensuring implementation of every MINED orientation. Parents were thankful for the community organizing role principals assumed under Ortega. All parents in El Roble spoke in glowing terms about Fausto, in and out of the classroom. The treasurer described him:

He has helped us a lot and we like him a lot. He’s not a Professor who says, “Come” and then doesn’t extend his hand... He has been a master of ceremonies at our activities, like the drinking water project when it was inaugurated. We look for him always because he is active in everything, and he is always helping us. And that’s why we help him. And that’s what we want, someone who is like that. The other two

⁴⁰³ El director, en todo caso el director es el Ministerio, es asesor, es administrador, dentro de su colegio. Es el que va a resolver. Porque ellos pone un director para resolver, no va a poner a uno para llevar los problemas a la Delegación. Yo cuando llego al Ministerio de Educación, yo digo, ‘Tuve este problema. Le di esta salida.’ No digo, ‘Tengo este problema,’ a buscarlo como resolver. Entonces, ¿y por qué me tienen aquí? ¿Para tocar el timbre y nada más? No. No es así. Entonces, eso es lo que pasa. Que no todo el mundo funciona o retoma las cosas como son. A veces por desconocimiento o a veces por querer vivir un día más, no tener muchos problemas. Y cuando usted como rector no tiene un equipo bien sólido para dar lugar, salida a toda esta problemática, se viene acumulando, se viene a un cauce, un, causando un cáncer...ya ellos dicen, ya no hay cura, no hay nada que hacer hasta explota, como guerra.

⁴⁰⁴ Es como se conviertan en capataz.

professors aren't active, not in the community. For every activity, every project, we look for him.⁴⁰⁵

Some community residents resented teachers who did not embrace their new role.

Teachers who identified as *simpatizantes* or Sandinista sympathizers⁴⁰⁶ lay along a spectrum of understanding and implementation that was similar to those who remained undecided or unsure. A notable sector of these teachers translated values education into poverty reduction – something they supported and in which many felt honored to participate. During PD reflections, teachers repeatedly spoke about how “in some students’ lives, we sometimes are the only adults who care about them,” and “education will help these kids develop goals, create their future, and contribute to a better life for them and their community.” After Adriana read the reflective piece, “The blame for everything in education” (see Chapter 1 and Appendix A), she began the reflection and asked others to add their thoughts.

ADRIANA: That’s right. It’s the students who suffer because they don’t learn, and when they don’t learn they won’t be able to get ahead. They’ll drop out and not have any opportunities to get ahead, one more generation in poverty. And we can stop that cycle.

TEACHER1: If we turn our backs on these kids, they will be unable to read, or write, or do basic math. They will be nobody. They won’t get ahead in their lives. They’ll be carrying the machete on their shoulder for the rest of their lives, barely surviving. We need to help them be somebody, to get a good job, support their family, support their community and the country.

TEACHER 2: I don’t think it’s just the students. Maybe they suffer in some ways, but not in others, right? Many of them come to school to socialize, to play, to have fun with each other. Some won’t even go inside the classroom! I think the teachers suffer as well.

TEACHER 3: I agree that it’s the students who suffer most when they don’t learn, and that all of us need to take responsibility. It’s a shared responsibility, like Daniel says.

⁴⁰⁵ Él nos ha ayudado bastante, y al nosotros lo queremos, pues, no es un Profesor que dice, ‘Venga,’ y no extiende la mano. (laughs). Porque nosotros queremos que venga y el Profesor es de confianza para cualquier cosa que necesiten él nos ayude. Nos ha servido de maestro de ceremonias en actividades, como el proyecto cuando se inauguró, el proyecto de agua potable. A él lo buscamos nosotros siempre porque él es en todo activo y siempre está con nosotros siempre apoyando. Y por eso nosotros lo apoyamos a él. Y eso es lo que nosotros queremos, alguien que, que, que sea así. Las otras dos profesoras no son tan activas, no en la comunidad. Él es el que está más activo, siempre allí. En toda actividad lo buscamos nosotros.

⁴⁰⁶ *simpatizantes*

Teacher often tied their PD reflections on remembering to care and give back to needing to improve their motivation. They reserved these self-criticisms to PD, and left them completely absent from “the talk” in classrooms and Assemblies with students and parents. In those contexts, teachers focused instead on all the things students had to change to learn if they wanted to be somebody, and all the things parents had to change to support their children to succeed.

Christian and patriotic beliefs permeated most teacher reflections during PD. School principals and facilitators used them as well, but they were much more inclined to insert GRUN and Sandinista values into their reflections. When they closed the reflection and began to announce that month’s orientations, facilitators interjected highly political content, mostly as informative, at times poking fun at a slogan, popular phrase, or campaign name (like “Live Pretty”). Teachers who were unsure about Ortega’s motives or disagreed with him tended to not implement more overtly Sandinista actions – like commemorations of Sandinista heroes and events, and student competitions in (Sandinista) history and values. School principals filled in where other teachers opted out.

Teachers who were publicly organized into opposition parties – particularly the Liberal Party – used their political beliefs (including strong anti-Sandinista sentiments) to denounce virtually the entire values education curriculum. Fausto explained:

There are teachers who clash with party slogans. It annoys them to see a black and red flag [the Sandinista flag]. Don’t we have the case of the [San Jose] high school? It all began because of that. We have two squadrons there. The ones who think like *Danielistas* and those who think like Liberals. They all fall into one of those two squadrons... Because the majority are Liberals there, so seeing a Sandinista principal, when they see Sandinista they only see Sandinista and when it’s Liberal, they only see Liberal. They shut down. So there can’t be reconciliation in that sense even though the [GRUN] model speaks of reconciliation.⁴⁰⁷

The Liberal teachers kicked out the Sandinista principal with the help of family, and the Delegate put another Sandinista principal “with a spirit of reconciliation” in her place. “You

⁴⁰⁷ Hay maestros que les choca simplemente las consignas del partido... [Si.] Es tan chocante ver una bandera roja y negra, ¿verdad? ¿Y si no tenemos el caso del instituto? El instituto comienza por eso. Porque allí hay dos escuadrones. Lo que piensan como Danielista y los que piensan como (pause), como (pause), como Liberales. Todos caen en uno de esos dos escuadrones, claro que caen por un lado u otro. Porque allí la mayoría son Liberales. Porque... y al ver una, una, una Directora Sandinista, que cuando ven Sandinista, solo ven Sandinista y cuando es Liberal solo ven Liberal. Y se cierra. Entonces no puede haber reconciliación. Aunque el modelo habla de reconciliación, también.

have to win over people,” Fausto and Adriana confided, through ongoing efforts towards *sensibilización*.

Fausto described the situation among teachers in the San Jose High School as “a civil war” and “like the war in Vietnam,”⁴⁰⁸ though each war was quite different from the other. He showed particular frustration with the Liberal teachers, claiming that “the classroom teachers can be atheist, can be whatever you want provided that independent of their ideology, they respect, apply to the letter what are the education policies of the Ministry of Education.”⁴⁰⁹ He knew of cases where teachers were “removed from the system for political questions” but declined to comment further, saying it was rare in his state. Where he had been principal at a large urban elementary school, the 58 teachers had fought over little things like lining the desk, things being ripped from the walls, “but the bigger fights, the worst ones, were about party politics. The fanatics were the worst, the dangerous ones.” He described those teachers as “closed, in euphoria and not open to reason, aggressive, imposing their beliefs and positions.” As principal, they were “the most difficult to work with.”

There was a large swath of the Nicaraguan population – including teachers – who identified as apathetic. They no longer believed in politicians or political parties. Many complained that “politics corrupt whoever enters into it” many said, and “nothing changes no matter who is in power.” Ortega slowly changed this percentage with his government’s emphasis on the poor, Christian and patriotic values, and business-friendly policies that saw Nicaragua grow 5% each year – more than any of its neighbors in the entire region. Like those teachers who were unsure about Ortega’s intentions, self-proclaimed apathetic teachers often let their politically-appointed Sandinista principal implement what they perceived as overly politicized mandates. “That’s their job,” they said.

Apathetic teachers and those who, like Ambrosia, chose not to publicly identify with any political party (“No one here knows what political leanings I have”), often focused on how their Christian (including solidarity) and patriotic beliefs segued with many of Ortega’s projects. This allowed them to overlook the “Socialist” and overtly Sandinista revolutionary

⁴⁰⁸ Como guerra civil; como la guerra en Vietnam

⁴⁰⁹ El maestro del aula puede ser ateo, puede ser lo que usted quiera. Siempre y cuando, independientemente de su ideología, tiene que respetar, se aplique a cabalidad lo que son las políticas educativas del Ministerio de Educación.

rhetoric. The most critical, though, were often Sandinista teachers, particularly those in leadership, who criticized heavily but privately, never in public among their colleagues.

Negotiating political beliefs when implementing orientations. The GRUN and MINED imposed Sandinista beliefs in many requirements teachers had to implement, like the annual school organizational plan (POA), professional development and its insistence on its curricular transformation. Teachers cited how some orientations were more politicized than others, and some programs as well, especially when Murillo publicly announced large roles for Sandinista Youth groups in school programs, like PINE and disaster mitigation. I look at teacher perceptions of this kind of politicization in this section.

The third 2013 POA. The third version of the 2013 annual plan was unusual for its strong Sandinista Party content. It read as an organizing plan for the FSLN in schools, with actions in the first pillar that included, “We will have Work sessions to reflect, evaluate and inform the Members of the Sandinista Leadership Councils from the national office, state, municipal offices and schools to deepen our Christian, Socialist and Solidarity Model in the distinct levels” (MINED, 2013, n.p.). The second pillar went even further. Its first action was to “improve the Organization, Functioning and Team Work of the Sandinista Leadership Councils in distinct levels: the MINED national offices, State and Municipal Delegations and Schools, with the objective of strengthening and consolidating our political reach, principal guarantee of success of the implementation of the policies and programs of our Government” (n.p.). Many actions repeated the objectives of either strengthening the “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” Model or Sandinista Party structures and organization at all levels – including in schools and communities.

The official title of the plan was “MINED: Institutional Plan 2013;” the pedagogic advisor had written above the typed title, “Elaboration of Singular (Unico) Plan, Community: San Jose de la Montana.” When I first read this third master plan, I thought the MINED had inadvertently provided teachers an internal FSLN document. Of the eight “pillars,” the first five were heavily weighted towards Sandinista Party organizing, strengthening and training^{xciii}. Though the first action in the first pillar described ongoing “Live Pretty” teacher trainings, it focused on GRUN values to guarantee “that from the Person, Family, School and Community, values are interiorized, promoted and practiced, to live in harmony, in solidarity, in healthy communities” (March 2013, n.p.). The same pillar’s last action oriented

integration of FSLN militants into all education modalities to ensure their ranks would “develop professionally and technically” (n.p.). Most of the other nine training actions in the training “pillar” referred to training Sandinista officials from national, state and municipal offices, principals, the second “34th Anniversary Brigade” of Sandinista Youth, and the Sandinista Student Federation.

This third annual plan upset many teachers in the nucleus for many reasons. Three top reasons were 1) It was the third plan in almost as many months, 2) It was announced at the last minute and not discussed with the teachers, and 3) It required teachers to become FSLN activists as part of their daily responsibilities. This latter aspect reinforced what many teachers and opposition figures repeatedly expressed: Daniel politicized education by bringing Sandinista values and programs into the schools and every teacher’s work. Education had always been politicized and it was normal to replace education leadership at the national, state and municipal levels – though not all technical staff. Daniel had replaced all leadership down to principals, and now was actively recruiting Sandinista youth to become teachers.

The fact that the MINED’s third annual plan of 2013 assumed all teachers would willingly enter into Sandinista Party organizing work in their schools and school communities was an affront to many teachers. Despite the Sandinista control in all four national areas of government, most Town Halls, and most Cabinets, the majority of teachers were not Sandinista militants. Some were vocally against the Sandinistas; some were members of other political parties; and some sympathized with the Sandinista cause but not Ortega; and some sympathized with Daniel on certain things and not others. As one teacher told me, “I love the revolutionary music, some of the programs are good because they help a lot of people, but I’m not an Orteguista, I’m not a Danielista. He’s changed from before; he’s different. Now in the 1980s, I was a Sandinista. Proud to be one, but this government is different. It’s not Sandinista.”

The 2013 Diplomado. The diplomado participants in the San Jose nucleus fell largely along political party lines and age. Many Sandinista-identified teachers participated, and all facilitators were publicly Sandinista. Non-Sandinista identified teachers who were close to retirement or had taught for more than 15 years did not participate. A handful of teacher sympathizers who had taught for between 10 and 15 years dropped out in the first months.

Adriana described the *diplomado*'s importance from her perspective:

I consider it's important, the government part, principally because it is a government idea to form teachers in coordination with the Ministry of Education, which is the organization that regulates us. Because the teacher, we have to be prepared in all ways, to manage, dominate and master all the public policies to be able to point to them, to teach people about them. That's where education lies.⁴¹⁰

She tied education of children with that of their adult family members.

We can affect not just the student but we go further into the community. All those orientations, everything about what one should do in health care, in the shared responsibility model, that is what we have to keep strengthening.⁴¹¹

This objective was so critical that the Sandinista Party sent a state party official to talk with teachers during a TEPCE after more than half of the San José nucleus teachers did not attend the first Saturday PD session – and declared they would not be attending any of the entire 24. To open her surprise visit, the official told teachers she came to listen to their concerns.

It came to our attention that this nucleo has an extremely low participation rate, and we want to know why. At the first trainings, attendance was good because they were on Fridays, and that is a work day. This is when you would be teaching, so you have to attend. But there has been a lot of concern about having the diplomado on Saturday, and mostly from the high school teachers. We want to know why, so I came here to listen to people's concerns/inquietudes.

After a handful of high school teachers openly expressed concerns, the Sandinista leader encouraged them to make the sacrifice to attend PD on Saturdays.

I know sacrifice. Believe me, I know sacrifice. I am a woman in Nicaragua, and we know how much we as women suffer in this country. Women often bring money to the home, to cover all the basic expenses of food, clothing, shoes, and we ingeniar when we do not have enough money to ensure that our kids get what they need, the basics.

I know sacrifice because I am currently getting my masters. My youngest is 4 months old and my oldest is 9 years old. I have four kids and when I began studying my oldest was 4 years old. I always took her with me each week to classes because I too

⁴¹⁰ Yo considero que es importante vaya, la parte del gobierno, y principalmente porque es un idea del gobierno la de formar a los maestros en coordinación con el Ministerio de Educación, que es nuestro ente que nos regula, verdad. Porque el maestro, como nosotros tenemos que estar preparados en todos los sentidos. Manejar, dominar, tener dominio sobre todas esas políticas públicas para apuntar hacia esos, educar sobre ellos, en eso es la parte de la educación

⁴¹¹ Podemos incidir no solo con el alumno sino vamos más allá hasta la comunidad. Toditas las orientaciones, todito sobre lo que debe hacer uno en cuanto a la salud, en cuanto a, en cuanto a ese modelo mismo de la responsabilidad ...que tenemos, verdad, compartida. Porque eso hay que irlo, como irlo fortaleciendo.

didn't have anyone to leave her with. It was great to get out of the house, know other places, know other people. She will get the degree with me!

An idea you all could talk about is if you want to bring someone here to take care of the kids who need to accompany their parents. The point here is to find solutions to challenges and not just get stuck in the challenge and say I can't do it. The government is providing an amazing opportunity. In most places you have to pay for your university classes. The *diplomado* offers three university-level classes for free. Most countries don't have that opportunity.

She underscored how most teachers jumped at the chance for free college credit, and that they thanked Daniel for listening to teachers and providing such an incredible opportunity.

Many teachers remained unconvinced. The high school computer teacher used government slogans and phrasings in response to the Sandinista leader with an emotion I only saw when teachers condemned the government privately.

This government likes to talk about restoration of rights. Restoration of rights in education, restoration of rights in health care, restoration of rights in different areas that they define. But what about the restoration of rights of the teacher to be with his family? What about the restoration of rights of the teacher to be paid a living wage for his work? What about the restoration of rights of the teacher to health care that doesn't take weeks to get a *cita*? Those rights are not talked about. But I will talk about them with you, because my daughter has the right to see her father every Saturday. Every child has the right to be with their parents on the weekend.

Even though Pelucita participated, she denounced the *diplomado* as political – like many of her colleagues who did not participate (e.g., Ambrosia, Regalia, Dinora and Gera; Liria and Reina dropped out in July and August, respectively).

This *diplomado* es practically education policy of the [Sandinista] party. Education policies, what the government wants to achieve. Nothing more. At the beginning, I thought we were would probably receive two or three sessions, how would I say, general ones. So the idea I had was just that, to do something general. And then, we were going to locate ourselves according to what we liked most. An example, I would like to study post-graduate in Spanish. I like math a little bit. And I like pedagogy. That's the idea I had.⁴¹²

⁴¹² Es que esto, esto del *diplomado* prácticamente son políticas educativas del partido. Políticas educativas, o sea, lo que quiere el gobierno lograr. Nada más. Al inicio, yo pensé, verdad, bueno la idea que yo me hice, mire, de allí me gusto, mire. La idea que yo tenía era que a lo mejor recibiríamos dos o tres encuentros algo..., como le diría (pausa), general, pensé yo. Y la idea que yo tenía era eso, hacer algo general. Y después, íbamos a ubicarnos de acuerdo a lo que a usted le gustara más. Un ejemplo, si a mí me gustara estudiar un pos-grado [nota: ella tiene licenciatura] en español, en español ser... a mí me gusta un poco la matemática, [entonces] la matemática. Si me gustaba en pedagogía, en pedagogía. Yo pensé, tenía esa idea, ¿verdad?

All teachers understood this to be true because that was exactly how the MINED had presented the *diplomado* to teachers when so many complained about the heavy focus (16 of 24 sessions) on Sandinista values and Sandinista government programs. In September 2014, when the MINED had not issued any college credit and had not provided the promised second level training in content areas of teachers' choice, Regalia said it confirmed her suspicions. "That's why I didn't go. They make you look stupid, believing all their promises. They never give away anything. It was all political. All propaganda. I don't like being used for their political purposes." She felt vindicated by her decision to not participate.

Curricular transformation. Many of the older teachers who did not identify publicly as Sandinista questioned the MINED's constant touting of its curricular transformation. The teachers said nothing had changed.

Ambrosia took umbrage with a different kind of curricular transformation: being forced to use Sandinista slogans and organize Sandinista commemorations at school.

They inject the campaign and Sandinista values as a party. Socialist, Solidarity, Christian. They inject a lot of politics. One feels that pressure to have to adopt that. One feels pressured. An example. If I am from a certain political party, I have to be talking well of that [Sandinista] party without being from that [Sandinista] party.⁴¹³

Other examples she cited included the slogans they all had to put in the front of their classrooms, and government flyers with Sandinista slogans and support for Daniel and Murillo that officials required be put up around every school. She also talked about how officials incorporated the slogans and Sandinista values into school programs, like early childhood education.

Have you seen those booklets that have slogans, all placed there? What is it called, the littlest ones? Love for the littlest ones? That's for children. So they are introducing politics to children, as if it's all mixed, injecting politics... Before, it wasn't allowed to inject any political party in schools. In the times of Somoza, before the 1980s, there wasn't anything like that.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ Meten la campana y los valores de los Sandinistas como partido. Socialista, Solidario y Cristiano. Si, se meten mucho la política. Se siente esa presión que, que tiene, que adoptar eso. Se siente uno presionada, pues. Tal vez en, un ejemplo, pues. Si yo soy de un determinado partido, tengo que estar hablando bien de ese partido sin que yo sea de ese partido.

⁴¹⁴ Ha visto unos, unas cartillitas, que tiene las consignas, todo puesto allí? Como es, la esa, para los, ¿cómo se llama, los más chiquitos? ¿El amor para los más chiquitos? Eso es para los niños, pues. Tiene, pues, como introduciendo la política a los niños. Pero, como que va..., como se llama, todo mezclado, pues, metiendo la política. Con esta revolución parece que no quieren (inaudible). Anteriormente, no se permitía meter a ningún partido en las escuelas. En el tiempo de Somoza, antes de los ochentas, no había nada de eso.

Ambrosia jumped all the way back to the Somoza dictatorship, leaving open the possibility that she believed – as many asserted – that neoliberal governments following the Sandinista revolution incorporated their politics into schooling just as heavily as Ortega.

Incorporating Sandinista Youth into schooling and school programs. GRUN officials often assigned Sandinista Youth groups to introduce and begin implementation of values projects in a community or school before they passed responsibility to teachers within a few months or years. In the Integrated School Nutrition Program (PINE), teachers coordinated the school meal while Murillo designated Sandinista Youth to do the nutrition census in some parts of the country. After teachers did not implement disaster prevention in 2012, Murillo introduced it as a Sandinista Youth priority in 2013. Young Sandinista cadre helped establish parts of school programs while normalizing them as “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” actions.

Murillo assigned youth to contribute to their political development and identity, and to serve as models for teachers. Murillo explained the former objective:

When a young person mobilizes for their Country, serving their People, serving Others, demonstrating Care for Others, on the one hand s/he is strengthening her heart, Christian, Socialist, Solidarity, and knowing that in the Service and Happiness of one’s Brother, one’s Sister, is our own Happiness. And on the other hand, we are learning about our People; because that Knowledge that has accumulated there in each one of us, in the Farmer, in the Mothers, in the Fathers, in the Young Farmers from whom we have so much to learn, that Knowledge has to continue reproducing.

When the government transferred programs to teachers that they had begun to implement with Sandinista Youth, they meant to *sensibilizar* teachers just as they did with the youth, changing teachers’ beliefs as they implemented and committed further to the national Sandinista project. This was how GRUN-guided participation across multiple sectors of the population reciprocally changed everyone’s lives, ways of thinking, being and acting. Teachers negotiated this overtly political process using a combination of beliefs, the most principal being perceived stringency of MINED supervision, political identities and beliefs about the GRUN and Ortega’s project, and perceptions regarding how what a program offered benefitted students and their families.

Murillo located a disaster mitigation training for teachers under “Live Pretty” as “a national effort...to better understand this Christian proposal, of faith, values, socialism,

family, community, solidarity and that we are all protagonists to assume leadership in our Homeland Nicaragua that is of us all and where the common good is our goal and has to be our daily agenda⁴¹⁵” (MINED INFORMA, March 4, 2013). Disaster mitigation, Murillo insisted, was one value among many including respect of authorities. This was particularly important during disasters because people were loath to leave the few belongings they had and many preferred to stay in their homes despite the danger.

Let’s respect, comply and motivate ourselves to comply with the orientations and directions of the National and Local authorities, the environmental, education, public health, sustainable agriculture, just commerce and production, and prevention and attention to disaster authorities...Let’s always defend and protect the Life, Health, Security and Well-being of all Beings that live in our Nicaragua⁴¹⁶” (Murillo, 2013, p. 10).

The PD for teachers was meant “to improve education quality in Nicaragua” (MINED INFORMA) and “promote a better quality of life, to promote attention, organization due to the risks we confront in a vulnerable country like ours, vulnerable to climate change, drought, flooding, earthquakes⁴¹⁷” (MINED INFORMA, March 4, 2013). It was on a Saturday, and only 17 classroom teachers attended with four facilitators (36.8% of nucleus teachers in total; coordinators rounded up and announced it was 40% participation). The training had no discussion about what to enact in disaster mitigation or how.

Shortly thereafter, Murillo put Sandinista Youth on the task. They developed a national work plan that included disaster mitigation to their other efforts of literacy and adult education, and food security/ nutrition. “We will work with SINAPRED,” Murillo announced, “to mobilize ourselves to the places, the vulnerable points, preparing ourselves for a secure winter [rainy season], more secure!” (Otero Mendieta, 2013, p. 7). She promised 2000 young Nicaraguans would go house to house with messages and information for

⁴¹⁵ un esfuerzo nacional, un esfuerzo para calificarnos, un esfuerzo para comprender mejor esta propuesta de cristianismo, de fe, de valores, de socialismo, de familia, de comunidad, de solidaridad y que todos somos protagonistas a asumir el liderazgo en esta Nicaragua Patria de todos en donde el bien común es nuestra meta y tiene que ser nuestra agenda cotidiana

⁴¹⁶ Respetemos, cumplamos, y motivémonos a hacer cumplir, las orientaciones e indicaciones de las Autoridades Nacionales y Locales, Ambientales, Educativas, de Salud Pública, de Agricultura Sostenible, Producción y Comercio Justos, de Prevención y Atención de Desastres, y todo lo que represente Derechos y Capacidades incrementados, para afianzar Rutas y Alianzas de Justicia Social y Prosperidad. Resguardemos siempre la Vida, la Salud, la Seguridad y el Bien-estar de todos los Seres que habitamos nuestra Nicaragua.

⁴¹⁷ Iniciamos esta charla de conocimientos, apropiación de conocimientos para mejorar la calidad de la educación en Nicaragua y también para promover mejor calidad de vida, para promover atención, organización frente a los riesgos que enfrentamos en un país vulnerable como el nuestro, vulnerable con el cambio climático, sequía, inundaciones, terremotos.

families to take measures to prepare against the effects of the rains. “We will review the critical flooding points, mud slides, to establish organized measures needed to prepare neighborhoods, communities... Youth and Cabinets of the Family, we will mobilize to clean riverbeds, streets and public places to reduce the probability of flooding” (Otero Mendieta, p. 8). Sandinista Youth were to be trained in rescue to then form rescue brigades in high risk municipalities. This was part of “learning together,” Murillo said, “so we fell protected, we feel secure. So we can be calm” (Otero Mendieta, p. 8). Teachers in San Jose said they would wait until Murillo ordered them to incorporate into disaster mitigation efforts. Until then, they would focus on their other responsibilities.

Teacher beliefs about politically charged values in orientations. Teacher beliefs and understandings about certain values in GRUN discourse, activities and projects varied significantly, often due to not understanding or agreeing with the content of the value. I use several cross-curricular pillars as examples of this influence on teacher understanding and practice. GRUN officials dismissed differing levels of understanding or agreement as transient. It was a natural evolution towards reaching the objective of values education to change or *sensibilizar* people to develop “coherence among who we are, what we think and what we do” (Murillo, 2013, p. 1) as one Nicaraguan people. Teachers who did not agree needed more *sensibilización* through more participation with others in PD and GRUN projects. The fact that some pillar competencies chafed against shared and individual teacher beliefs was to be expected; it was part of the revolutionary process, changing values and ways of living.

One example of a clash of beliefs was with the ninth cross-curricular competency in Equity and Diversity in Education that read: “Practice a culture of equality of opportunities between the sexes without distinction of race, religion or socioeconomic with the objective of contributing to people’s human rights.” Teachers I knew were themselves steeped in “traditional” and unequal gender roles and beliefs in their personal and professional lives. None agreed with Murillo’s national “feminist” experiment that included the requirement that half of all governing bodies were women from the Cabinets (community associations) in every community to the National Assembly. Many were uncomfortable with Murillo stiffening laws under which a woman lodged a complaint with police against a man for harassment and he was arrested and jailed for six months before any investigation of the

complaint. Rather than the woman having to provide two witnesses for rape and domestic abuse, and prove she did nothing to provoke the attack, now the man had to prove his innocence. This radical legislated path to gender equity infuriated and terrified most men as laws became stricter and more pro-women every few years.

Gender hierarchy and inequity were a strong part of institutional life in the MINED as well as rural life in many families. Most of the multigrade teachers were single parents, mostly mothers struggling to make ends meet. In the nucleus, Fausto was the only male multigrade teacher. He was a highly respected Sandinista activist, a national teacher-trainer and MINED teacher trainer as well as El Roble's principal and nucleus facilitator for all 24 multigrade teachers from the 12 member schools. The nucleus overall had less than 7 male teachers. The four-person facilitation group was two women and two men. During PD, the 6 male high school teachers often talked among themselves at the back of the basketball and all left early each session, usually after attendance. Emilia expressed these gender differences rooted in faith when in class one day she asked and answered: "Where do we women come from?" When there was no answer, she provided one: "From the rib of the man."

All rural family members and teachers talked about rural-urban inequities. The multigrade teachers in the nucleus made constant references and jokes about being at the bottom of the professional ladder in their profession. They shared stories of being treated as second class citizens by high school teachers and MINED officials. Some of them linked this to three strikes: being women, poor and rural. Most of them had grown up in the countryside and the few from urban communities, like Liria, lived in one-room tin shacks shared with parents, brothers and sisters and their families. Urban colleagues, multigrade teachers said, assumed the rural teachers were less intelligent and worse teachers.

This came to light in most PD sessions. In September 2013, the multigrade teachers began to plan for a Secret Santa among everyone in the *diplomado* for early November. As they planned, a facilitator approached the group to tell them the high school teachers would not participate. Almost all the high school teachers lived in the municipal capital. They commuted each day to San Jose on interdepartmental buses. Most of the multigrade teachers lived in the region within walking or biking distance of their school. The rural teachers stopped their planning and began to digest their belief that their urban colleagues did not want gifts from them. "They think we'll give them a chicken with lice," one said to the

group, causing an outburst of giggles and guffaws. Others shared why they thought the urban teachers refused. All related to the inequities they perceived for being rural, multigrade teachers coming from rural families in rural communities. Teachers in general were devalued by society (Vijil, 2014) and individual stories multigrade teachers told emphasized their perception of lower status from urban teachers, officials, parents, and strangers.

Another cross-curricular pillar challenged many teachers' beliefs: violence prevention. It called on all Nicaraguans to change their daily interactions with children.

To promote new styles of raising children and appropriate education models, free of physical and humiliating punishments like disciplinary correction methods at school and in the home...to create a safe and agreeable environment in the home, school and community where people feel valued, capable of giving an opinion and of participating without exclusion. (MINED, 2009, p. 129)

The teachers received no trainings on what was meant by “appropriate education models” or “agreeable environments.” Giving opinions and participating in conversations were not part of the school day. They did not fit within the focus on teaching as transmitting or facilitating information for children to learn at home, studying the information they copied into their notebooks. When teachers attempted to incorporate students' lives into a lesson, they often included the scolding tone they used during “the talk” or accusations that included content from the talk – that students did not learn because of their misbehavior, that they lied when they said they were sick, and so on.

To implement this and other pillars, the education system had to oversee a paradigm shift within many levels of its institutions and leaders. Requiring teachers to comply with MINED mandates and copy cross-curricular pillars verbatim into monthly and daily lesson plans could not accomplish the understandings and shifts in behavior delineated in the pillars. It required a “shared responsibility” effort on the part of all stakeholders. In the meantime, mandating change sufficed. In addition to not understanding or agreeing with some of the values the GRUN mandated, one's political party beliefs often helped a teacher decide if and how to implement different values mandates.

Chapter Summary

This chapter built on the previous two chapters by looking at the role teacher beliefs played in values education implementation in multigrade classrooms. I explained how

teacher understandings of values and anti-values in the classroom contrasted with institutional and government values and beliefs. Teacher understandings of student anti-values behaviors as where they needed to focus values education was an opportunity GRUN officials ignored as they focused on “the big picture” of societal transformation in every family and community. By not addressing teacher-student interactions and relationships through better classroom management, which is what teachers felt they needed, punitive and emotional threats and punishments were an integral part of every classroom day – to everyone’s detriment. Not addressing these belief systems also allowed teachers to blame students and family for everything from students not learning to their misbehaviors to getting hurt on school grounds. These strategies and beliefs about values and anti-values were replicated throughout the waterfall, as MINED officials treated teachers similarly to how teachers treated students and family.

Another belief system that played an outsized role in values education was political party identity and beliefs about Ortega, Murillo and Orteguismo. Teachers did not use their political party identity and beliefs in a vacuum; political party identity was an important part of many Nicaraguan’s individual identity, to some it was aligned with their religious faith and patriotic beliefs – and related actions. Political party identity often arose in daily conversations and guided daily decisions and actions – particularly when reaching out to local government services or benefitting from Ortega’s many social programs. In education specifically, the GRUN institutionalized Sandinista and revolutionary beliefs into education policy and programs. Values education was a principal vehicle for communicating and enacting Sandinista values and beliefs. Officials relied upon and imposed “Christian, Socialist, Solidarity” values on the population – including teachers. Values were arguably the most important engine toward societal transformation and mass *sensibilización*. This perspective embedded in mandates and programs moved many classroom teachers to use their individual belief systems about politics and the Sandinistas to filter mandates, understand them and act upon them. GRUN officials focused on teacher *sensibilización* over time as a process to educate teachers about the worth of supporting GRUN efforts, beginning with faithful compliance with its orientations until beliefs changed and teachers felt more internally committed to the Sandinista vision. By ignoring questions, silencing dissent, and demanding faithful compliance, teachers used individual political beliefs extensively while

admitting they GRUN's politicization was injurious to their profession. And yet virtually everyone used a complex mixture of political party beliefs in their work.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

The experiences of rural multigrade elementary school teachers in Central Nicaragua suggest several conclusions about relationships among teacher beliefs systems, knowledge and practice. As teachers in Central Nicaragua enacted the government's constantly changing values education program, they used many combinations of beliefs and knowledge. The study showed how useful and at times critical it can be to identify and examine a broad range of belief systems in order to understand teacher practice - beliefs related to schooling and those typically ignored as falling outside of school settings (Five & Buehls, 2012, p. 478).

The broad range of beliefs systems I examined, that teachers cited as relevant to their decisions regarding values education, included the following: beliefs about specific values the government promoted; about values education in schools; about roles of family and society in teaching values; about political identity, the Sandinistas and the presidential couple; and about teaching and learning academic content versus values. These interacted with other beliefs regarding compliance, supervision, loyalty and contrarianism. Many of these beliefs were steeped in teacher experiences (particularly as 1-11 students and teacher preparation). They were reinforced through socio-professional relationships and interactions, some designed and overseen by MINED officials and others created among the teachers themselves. As research has shown, teacher practices varied in relation to the different beliefs and knowledge they used when making decisions regarding values education mandates. This research showed how dynamic teachers' cognitive processes are, how broad their range of beliefs can be, and how the combinations they use defy universal definitions or generalized frameworks of how teachers should or should not use beliefs and knowledge in practice.

Researching teacher beliefs in relation to how they develop provides new insights

Despite research that shows that beliefs develop over time in relation to social experiences and widely shared (societal) beliefs, and knowledge, my initial effort focused on understanding individual teacher beliefs and knowledge through classroom observations and teacher conversations. I observed and heard contested beliefs regarding certain values in the curriculum, specific values actions the government mandated, roles regarding who should teach values to children, and what kinds of values education was a priority in schooling and classrooms. Teachers held what many considered "Nicaraguan beliefs" (widely shared across

populations and settings) about specific values and their power to create change – personally, in a family, a community and even a nation. They showed a generalized concern about violence and anti-values that most people perceived to be taking over the country, particularly among its youthful majority. They prioritized addressing anti-values behaviors in everyday classroom interactions. In stark contrast to government officials' lively conversations about anti-values and ongoing orientations regarding continuous values enactment, they maintained a group silence on what teachers perceived as the biggest values crisis in school classrooms: daily anti-values behaviors. These included physical and relational aggressions, stealing or breaking others' property, and a general lack of respect, responsibility, and honesty.

Research shows that people develop hierarchies among belief systems through their experiences, the people who influence them and societal tools they use (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992). Nonetheless, educational psychology research on teacher beliefs has focused almost exclusively on individual teacher beliefs and knowledge (or an aggregate and averaging of a group of these). This study showed how an examination of overlapping societal, institutional and individual belief systems was vital to understanding individual teacher practices. It helped identify relationships among participating teachers' cognitions and practices with relationships and interactions they had among people, materials and discourse in their socio-professional surroundings. The multi-sited, psycho-social framework helped me understand relationships among societal, institutional, socio-professional and individual beliefs and knowledge in context: in different schools and classrooms, with educators of varying political beliefs and identities, according to different values education mandates and activities, in the classroom with students and in the school with adult family members, in values PD sessions, and so on. This helped me understand how teachers negotiated overlapping beliefs and knowledge according to the context of different values education mandates: the actors or participants, topics and content, purposes or functions, environments, emotional tones, sequences of events, and interaction rules (Saville-Troike, 1989). This multi-sited approach to understanding teacher beliefs contributed to a greater, nuanced understanding of teacher beliefs that education research has determined as most relevant to teaching and learning in school (i.e., beliefs about pedagogy, self, content knowledge, students, family). Teachers have developed their beliefs about pedagogy, self,

content, students, families and school communities using complex hierarchies of belief systems that extend well-beyond present-day schooling, curriculum and stakeholders – as shown in this study. By understanding the broader belief systems in which standard teacher beliefs (listed above) were embedded, I was able to understand how teachers used different combinations of beliefs and knowledge in their values education practice.

By listening to and observing teachers, I identified relationships among multi-layered beliefs, knowledge and practice from teachers' perspectives, which helped me understand why some teachers implemented values program (and all its orientations) faithfully, why others implemented certain orientations and not others, and why still others rejected all values activities – except one: copying cross-curricular pillars into monthly and daily lesson plans along with monthly values. In looking solely at teacher practice, I could identify three broad umbrellas: full compliance, full non-compliance and iterations in between. From a multi-sited, psycho-social perspective, I identified beliefs-knowledge combinations that contributed to each outcome, contributing to a richly nuanced understanding of the three general outcomes.

Combinations of beliefs systems pointed to numerous reasons behind why participating teachers (elementary and high school) continued steadfast in their daily, repetitive scoldings and public humiliations of students in spite of MINED discourse about transforming interactions with children in and out of school – and a widely shared belief in compliance with MINED mandates. Combinations of beliefs helped explain why some teachers resented a top-down, Sandinista values education program that ignored what they perceived to be the principal values education need in their classroom, while others embraced it, and still others boycotted parts and left school principals to enact Sandinista commemorations and other similar activities. How teachers used different combinations of beliefs systems helped explain why some teachers taught values in a rote way and others did not, or why some teachers separated classroom values teaching with children from the government's adult-focused orientations, and why some teachers taught values in the classroom and school community, while others chose one or the other.

By studying beliefs systems and how teachers used them over time in different settings contributed to deep understandings of how some teacher beliefs, knowledge and actions changed with time while others' became more entrenched and static. In Nicaragua,

changes and continuity often occurred in relation to local elections, and school or community programs offered locally. These were not directly related to academic schooling, yet they influenced teachers as powerfully and in conjunction with changing education policies. Initially, I did not contemplate examining such a broad cross-section of overlapping contexts over time (history-present-future), across teaching-learning settings (1st – 6th grades and teacher PD across content, family) and multiple levels of society (e.g., national government, MINED state and municipal, school communities, schools and classrooms, families, individuals). Soon into field work, though, constant teacher references to the MINED, Ortega and Murillo made it clear that my micro-classroom focus provided me with one small slice of understanding relationships among teachers' beliefs, knowledge and practices – and how teachers used and prioritized them throughout the classroom day and year. My micro, individual focus ignored how teachers used unique combinations of belief systems and knowledge – their own and others' – that they cobbled together according to each situation. Teachers spoke daily about how and why interactions with government officials, policies and procedures in using the national curriculum were critical to what they did. I could only understand this by also understanding Ortega's governance as well as government and MINED beliefs, knowledge and practice – particularly how they were communicated to and influenced teacher understandings and practice.

The study also showed how shared societal beliefs intertwined with institutional and individual ones – and how their inextricability influenced teacher decisions and practice. An overarching belief system present and active in all levels of Nicaraguan society was the country's history of U.S. imperialism, the Somoza dictatorship, the 1980s Sandinista revolution, 17 years of neoliberal governments led mostly by the Liberal Party, and Ortega's new version of Sandinismo kept alive through "historic memory" references in discourse and commemorative actions. This belief system was related to conflicting beliefs related to national and personal trauma, liberation, sovereignty and pride. It was based upon a long past that reached into the present and drew upon future aspirations. These societal, institutional and teacher beliefs were often related with patriotic and faith-based beliefs as well as a shared understanding that with values one could accomplish anything. These beliefs systems at first glance may seem unrelated to schooling and education, but they were critical to understanding how and why teachers used certain beliefs and knowledge over others much

of values education work. A multi-layered understanding of overlapping beliefs systems, including historical roots and aspirational identities, informed understandings of beliefs stability and flexibility as well as social, institutional and individual reinforcers of beliefs systems.

Understanding individual teacher beliefs was furthered by similarly layered knowledge: shared societal, institutional and local, indigenous understandings. Though I identified individual and shared teacher knowledge (and knowledge gaps) first in classroom observations, I learned how they often echoed or paralleled institutional knowledge and knowledge gaps. This was possible to confirm to some degree with official documents and discourse. It became much clearer in private collegial spaces of professional development. The government's emphasis on compliance and loyalty, in contrast to its discourse on constructivism and autonomy, closed spaces for teachers to address the knowledge gaps they identified and expressed interest in overcoming. This directly affected their practice – and their fear of experimenting or innovating with change.

Shared societal beliefs systems were integral to individual ones

Every person's beliefs and knowledge develop and change, or are reinforced and become more entrenched, as they interact with people, places, things and ideas in their environment over time. One's socio-cultural formation happens through shared experiences, histories, relationships and widely shared (e.g., privileged or valued) societal beliefs. In Nicaragua, most teachers maintained a strict separation between teaching and learning academic content versus teaching values. This related in part to societal beliefs that the family was the principal (if not sole) educator of values and that values provided meaning to life in general, an individual and family – and the academic curriculum. It was also rooted in the fact that teachers were highly experienced in academic teaching and learning (from their 1-11 grade experiences as students, their teacher preparation and ongoing PD, and their years of experience as teachers in classrooms). Their childhood experiences and teacher preparation did not include values education, a vacuum that contributed to teachers' strict separation of values education in schools from well-established understandings about academic teaching and learning processes, roles and content.

Many teachers and parents expressed a conviction that political party beliefs had no place in education and opposition figures cited the Nicaraguan Constitution as a legal

prohibition against the Ortega government's interjection of party politics into all aspects of Nicaraguan life, including education. Nonetheless, most teachers used their beliefs about Ortega and Murillo in many decisions they made. This reflected how integrated political identities and beliefs were to people's daily lives. A similar ideal and law separated church from state. Again, it did not mean that on the ground or in teachers' minds the two were separated. In every PD reflection, several teachers reflected on how their faith was a main guide for them as they practiced their profession. Government officials regularly encouraged people to cement their patriotic and religious beliefs with political ones, equating them as complementary. They oriented teachers to serve as government spokespeople and community organizers in the name of strengthening Nicaragua (a patriotic duty) and helping the poor (a Christian principle). This discourse resonated with most teachers, and effectively encouraged them to comply with values initiatives that they justified as patriotic or religious rather than part of the Orteguista political agenda.

These teacher belief systems demonstrated how teachers joined shared societal beliefs systems with other beliefs when they embraced or rejected values education in general, or certain parts and not others. The shared societal beliefs systems Nicaraguan teachers regularly used were not strictly educational or about teaching and learning in school. Still, they played outsized roles in teacher decisions in all four teaching areas I analyzed (values education, plans and planning, math and language arts). Just as beliefs research stresses, these broader societal beliefs that teachers shared served as sturdy umbrellas to less embedded, simpler or newer beliefs or beliefs systems they developed, in this case those related more specifically to education and schooling, and to academic content areas found in the school curriculum.

Understanding institutional beliefs systems helps understand individual ones

Teachers talk about the beliefs and knowledge they negotiate and use when they instruct during a lesson, in PD, and with colleagues. In Nicaragua, a major theme during teacher talk was the MINED and GRUN, particularly the government waterfall of people (structurally), information (discourse) and expectations (policies, curricular tools). The teachers helped me realize that I could never understand their thinking processes or actions without understanding the Ortega government and MINED, that I had to study these influences further. GRUN officials routinely defined teachers as important protagonists in the

government's societal transformation efforts, and responsible for failures in helping students learn academic content inside the classroom. Much of this construction stemmed from their positioning teachers as actors who faithfully complied with what the government deemed most important while officials ignored and did not try to understand teachers as actors who faithfully complied with government policy and procedures inside the classroom as well.

I began to understand "the state" as a fluid entity comprised of people who had constant social interactions and relationships with teachers. It was not a static, behemoth institution or set of bureaucratic structures and non-human procedures (Greenhouse, Mertz and Warren, 2002) removed, distant or neutral in teachers' lives. On the contrary, "the state" and "society" contributed to who each teacher was, what and how she thought, and how she acted. When teachers talked about the government, they named Daniel and Murillo more often than using the words "the government." They personalized local MINED orders as coming from "the Delegate" and named individual pedagogic advisors, or the "Profe," for concerns, challenges or conflicts they faced when deciding if and how to implement a policy or orientation at their schools.

The teachers' conversations and ideas guided me to understand the institutional beliefs that were embedded in policy, curricular materials and supervision – and how these related with individual teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice. I also found that a focus on official discourse was woefully inadequate to understanding the government because its public discourse tended to represent a future ideal to work toward. It also contrasted with officials' private discourse face-to-face with teachers much of the time. A prominent example was constructivism. Officials espoused the miracles of constructivism even as they maintained and acted upon deep behaviorist beliefs regarding academics, social learning beliefs in values education, and a combination of the two in PD. Individual constructivism – what teachers and officials referred to when talking "constructivism" – was notably absent in practice.

Systematic ignorance of institutional beliefs and their role in teacher decision-making – or systematic negation that institutional beliefs exist or are in any way important or relevant to individual teacher practice – lays the groundwork to rationalize an exclusive focus on individual teachers to understand, evaluate and often criticize teacher practice. It builds research-based misunderstandings and opens the door to individualizing or personalizing

what are quite accurately multi-level, systemic challenges (with plenty of blame to go around). The teachers in Nicaragua were at the bottom of the waterfall, and yet they were isolated from that massive, complicated context and blamed individually for a generalized, systemic challenge: low student learning and performance. This study showed how MINED-created spaces with scripted and unscripted collegial and socio-professional interactions played an enormous role in how teachers made decisions regarding which combinations of beliefs and knowledge they would use in their practice. It also showed a similar role in local school environments and official knowledge communicated in curricular materials, PD and other messaging forums.

I did not coin the phrase “waterfall of learning.” Government officials and school principals used the term to describe teacher PD, nucleus school functioning, and other governance models. Historically, the Sandinistas used “waterfall of learning” to describe how they organized the world renowned National Literacy Crusade of 1980. Ortega revived the phrase to describe his education reforms and unprecedented PD effort in 2013 (i.e., 37 workshops for all teachers). I extended the term, as concept and method, to describe the many tributaries that flowed from the main government waterfall – of information and slogans, of procedures and expectations, of supervision and accompaniment. The waterfall as a concept was fundamental to virtually all MINED-teacher interactions – mostly top-down, involving loyal replication or repetition of orders from higher ups. Institutional beliefs embedded in the waterfall about teaching-learning processes – as multiple repetitions of simplified information in mass replications within short periods of time, to then have participants split up and replicate the information with ever larger and more diverse groups of people around the country – influenced teachers. The waterfall of learning communicated the government’s commitment to stimuli-response learning (classical conditioning/behaviorism). The constant threats and punitive environments created for teachers by MINED officials, and for students by teachers, demonstrated a similarly deep commitment to teaching and learning through threats and punishments (operant conditioning/behaviorism). In PD and policies (with strict supervision) regarding teacher planning, automatic promotion and remediation, officials paid no attention to cognitive understandings or change. While discourse about constructivism was daily and flooded official MINED documents, exactly what it was in

theory or practice remained murky; it was a future ideal that saw minimal practice in the present.

The MINED also believed that people learned through mandates (a favored form of information transmission). MINED officials mandated change without providing the accompaniment or material resources necessary for implementation because they also relied on social learning among teachers. Though officials were careful to create teacher spaces they controlled and used for supervision and uniform messaging or communication, they also relied on informal networks teachers created to understand MINED mandates and decide if and how to act upon them. This stemmed from the belief that teachers had the knowledge necessary upon receiving a mandate (stimuli-response learning). Officials also emphasized social learning in how they envisioned adult community members learning Sandinista values: through action, being protagonists together, in community. Most everyone in the education system kept these two beliefs systems separate: academic content teaching and learning was individual, repetitive and memoristic, values learning was social through group action(s). Teachers had to negotiate these often contradictory institutional beliefs with their own in their daily practice.

Teachers enact different combinations of beliefs in context. Teachers used their own beliefs systems and those shared by colleagues when addressing anti-values behaviors of students in classrooms, their political identities when they perceived politicization of values activities, and a combination of their own beliefs with beliefs regarding compliance when they copied cross-curricular pillars into their plans but did not implement them. After identifying a broad range of beliefs systems directly related to schooling, I could more accurately identify and understand combinations of beliefs teachers used in changing contexts. I came to understand teacher beliefs systems as combinations of individual belief systems combined with socio-professional, institutional and shared or societal beliefs systems. Some teachers used very stable belief and knowledge systems – like Regalia and Emilia (a veteran and novice, respectively) – and were incredibly faithful to the letter (not necessarily the spirit) of MINED orientations, institutional beliefs about teaching and learning methods, and content. Others – like Liria, Ambrosia, Gera and Dinora – drew a little more flexibly on a slightly bigger toolbox of belief and knowledge systems. This rigidity and flexibility depended on overlapping contexts, personal experiences, content, and physical

settings – and which beliefs systems each teacher prioritized. Teachers approached teaching and learning differently because they prioritized beliefs systems differently, particularly those outside their teaching identity (i.e., political identity) or those less closely related to MINED content or reform mandates (at times diluting the power of compliance beliefs).

This study of values education in multigrade elementary classrooms in central Nicaragua shows how understanding how past and present teacher experiences and beliefs related with the Ortega government's values education program (and its embedded beliefs and knowledge) provides a methodological example for understanding how teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice relate. It underscores how teachers enact different belief systems in relation to micro and macros influences taken together. It provides a stark contrast to research that hails an exclusive focus on individual teacher beliefs through self-reports, which admittedly provide partial understandings of real-time beliefs systems interactions and relationships. Research that studies in real-time how teachers use different combinations of beliefs in context contributes to current literature which lacks evidence as to what combinations of beliefs and knowledge teachers use in context or why. Research that studies interactions among micro and macro belief and knowledge systems held and used by teachers will contribute to breaking the normalization of condemning individual teachers for institutional problems rooted in societal and institutional beliefs and knowledge.

Understanding beliefs as they relate to knowledge and knowledge gaps

Not surprisingly, this study showed how existing institutional and individual knowledge interacted with overlapping beliefs to play a large role in teacher practice. Teachers used their experiences and understandings about teaching and learning, the content they taught, and the methods they used according to what and how they learned as 1st – 11th grade students. These beliefs were reinforced during their teacher preparation, which several teachers described as high school repeated.

Institutional beliefs about teaching and learning interacted with teacher knowledge and knowledge gaps. When teachers raised questions about content they did not understand, MINED officials never entered into a conversation about the meaning of that content. The most common official response (in private PD settings) was that teachers should copy and transmit MINED provided information just as it was provided to teachers. On their own time

(like students studying at home to memorize the information they copied in school), teachers could study and learn the content.

The MINED furthered knowledge gaps in its own PD. During a PD session on didactic planning, the written document teachers read aloud to each other provided a stark contrast to the TEPCE one-size-fits all, scripted planning procedures that MINED officials controlled heavily. The PD document introduced new information that teachers were forbidden to use in the TEPCE planning environment. This institutional disconnect made it easy for many teachers to dismiss the PD as political propaganda, particularly when MINED officials regularly touted all PD as successfully providing teachers with new tools that contributed to improving education quality. In his comparison of Brazilian, Chilean and Cuban school systems, Carnoy (2007) found that Cuba's school system produced the best results by far of the three because it ensured tight coordination between its teacher education and existing curriculum (and education policies). He warned that this coordination did not occur spontaneously, an apt warning to the Nicaraguan government that believed differently.

MINED PD on pedagogy focused on learning assessment with no attempt to bridge the new information with standard practices or education policies. The PD facilitators offered few practical examples or ideas, and its designers did not model or embed alternative assessment tools in the 24-session diplomado. Instead, assessment throughout the diplomado was non-existent. Teachers were "graded" on one purely summative assessment, a portfolio, at the very end. In each session, facilitators handed teachers written documents to read aloud in groups in a short timeframe. Some groups never read a full page. Most read a maximum of three pages. Some documents were more than twenty pages long. A little more than half of the documents had questions to answer at the end of the document, though these were rarely discussed. The other documents had no questions about the content for teachers to discuss. The four sessions on assessment referred to self, peer, formative and performance assessments and yet none were introduced or used in practice in the diplomado. The government transmitted the information, publicly declared each PD a success, and teachers continued to assess student learning during the one-week grading period the MINED continued to stipulate in TEPCE workshops. In September 2014 during a return visit to El Roble, Regalia created her social studies exam as every teacher I knew continued to do: she converted each sentence from one paragraph in the MINED textbook into a question, and had

formulated the five sentences into a question and answer study guide that doubled as the final exam. This, too, was MINED policy. All teachers cited how MINED policies and requirements reinforced the copy-memorize-represent method. Many yearned for a small break from a widely perceived institutional straight-jacket, what Fausto described as “opening the ring that is tightly shut” to provide additional content and pedagogical content knowledge in all subject areas so teachers could respond to the myriad of student needs in their classrooms.

This analysis does not remove a teacher’s individual responsibility for knowledge gaps in any way. Instead, it locates individual teacher knowledge and knowledge gaps in bigger and broader contexts, including how it developed, how it was reinforced, and influences on how teachers decided to use it in each teaching moment and over time. This analysis provides a framework for identifying and addressing existing knowledge and knowledge gaps, similar to that for overlapping belief systems. Rather than seeing this as purely each individual teacher’s responsibility once she has graduated into her own classroom, it helps everyone understand (and study) knowledge and beliefs as cultural, acquired individually and socially, in a jagged process over time. It helps understand existing teacher knowledge as intricately connected to societal, institutional and individual beliefs and belief systems, and that to change or add to existing knowledge one must understand what one already knows, how one knows it, and why one knows it – and how one will use existing knowledge to filter and understand – and possibly acquire or reject – new knowledge.

Alternative explanations for (lack of) teacher change

Research on education reform documents the many frustrations administrators and some colleagues feel about teachers who do not change their practices willingly or easily. This environment prevailed in Nicaragua and was part of daily discourse and conversation. Through a multi-sited psycho-social analysis, I understood the majority of teachers who continue rote practices and either do not struggle to implement constructivism or struggle with minute adaptations to an overwhelming transmission focus. The analysis offered no easy target to blame but rather an understanding of how past and present teacher experiences with the waterfall of learning, information and supervision contributed and reinforced the commonly voiced MINED frustration with this phenomena. The MINED, policy makers and

international agencies routinely blamed individual teachers who continued with rote, memoristic, traditional practices.

By studying teacher beliefs and knowledge – including where they came from and how they were reinforced in the present – I found a powerful source of resistance to constructivism: MINED officials. There were numerous examples of how the education system and government reinforced the rote, memoristic, traditional practices its officials vehemently denounced. It was apparent in its policies (like automatic promotion in all grades); one National Basic Curriculum for all schools; prescriptive planning procedures and teaching expectations reinforced by supervisory visits (a steady focus on strict adherence to thrice-copied, hand-written plans over instruction and learning); and PD methods, most notably the waterfall of replications led by a small homogenous group of Sandinista leaders to be replicated to all school communities nationally in exactly the same way.

Another powerful reinforcer of rote methods over constructivism was teacher memories of their experiences as an elite group of learner-survivors of what they perceived as the same educational system and same curriculum that they learned from. Their teachers relied on rote, memoristic practices, as did their teacher preparation. Parents who had attended even one grade of school reinforced these beliefs as well: school was where you went to copy, memorize and repeat information to the teacher.

A common reinforcer of maintaining the status quo during reform is lack of teacher knowledge – and the challenges of conceptual change. In Nicaragua, few cited teacher knowledge as a barrier to reform and change. That would reflect poorly on teacher preparation and PD, the exclusive domain of the government, so there was a general consensus that teachers had the knowledge they needed – they did not use it to teach. Some contextualized this as a lack of values. Gaps in teacher knowledge did exist, across all content areas including values education, and they stemmed directly from gaps in institutional knowledge about constructivism. MINED officials, policies, curricular materials and access to material resources reflected knowledge gaps, as did the decision to provide no PD or a transformed curriculum to address them. It was not simply a challenge of individual teachers.

A case for contextualizing over simplifying

Teaching-learning processes in schooling stem from complex interactions and relationships among thousands of human beings and their cognitions (past, present and future), material resources, physical settings, historical roots and societal understandings, as well as institutional actors, beliefs and knowledge. Research on effective teaching has simplified this complexity by focusing on a finding that learning relies heavily on the teacher, and teacher-student interactions. It has developed lists of best practices and static frameworks of teacher beliefs and knowledge. What it has not done as thoroughly, is develop frameworks for understanding how multiple levels of beliefs and knowledge, interactions and relationships, interact with individual teacher beliefs and knowledge as they negotiate each school day. Similarly, as school systems face increasing crises, for their overall student populations as in Nicaragua or for specific underserved populations in the U.S. and Europe, policy makers have simplified their responses, again focusing on identifying the bad teacher to fire or the inexperienced teacher to train. To be successful, a society's response to systemic teaching-learning challenges (i.e., across entire populations or within entire sub-populations) must build upon a deep understanding of the complexity of teaching-learning processes as they change in different settings. A psycho-social framework provides promise.

Every teacher knows that she uses different combinations of beliefs systems in relation with her knowledge as she maneuvers through constantly changing interactions that depend on the teacher, learner(s), colleagues, curriculum, external policies and other psycho-social and physical environmental factors. Researchers have raised calls to understand beliefs as they are: "complex, multifaceted and varied" (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 486); functioning "in different ways, as filters, frames or guides" with "a reciprocal relationship with context and experiences" (p. 487). Though teacher beliefs "are best understood as integrated systems" that are context-dependent, few research studies attempt to study them as complex systems that teachers hold and partially or fully enact in relation to a multitude of other belief systems depending on many external factors. Fives and Buehl found that "teachers' beliefs are related to their practices and student outcomes, but enactment of beliefs may be hindered by individual and contextual constraints" (p. 487). In this research, I showed it was necessary to understand relationships among teacher beliefs, knowledge and practice as contextualized systems, interactions and expectations, including societal, institutional and personal. I

showed how important it is to identify the many beliefs teachers hold in relation to specific aspects of their practice, how these are formed, how teachers use them (or parts of them) in context, how they negotiate other related beliefs systems around them, and why. This understanding lays a strong foundation for examining how teachers beliefs and beliefs systems – and how they use them – changes over time according to changing contexts. Fives and Buehl (2012) found two studies – both qualitative – that highlighted “the embedded nature of belief systems and the importance of such systems in understanding potential influences on teachers’ beliefs and practices” (p. 478). They called for more research in this vein.

Practical Implications

There are several practical implications from this study. Though my primary focus below is on teacher professional development, other areas include curriculum, policy, supervisorial, classroom pedagogic accompaniment, and material resource access implications. For one final reflection, I look at teacher professional development below.

Teacher professional development. Much of the idea for doing this study came out of my combined experiences of facilitating PD with Salvadoran elementary and middle school teachers and teaching student teachers at a Southwest university in the U.S. (teacher preparation). Through this work, I became aware of research on teacher best practices in general and in PD specifically. Several key findings now widely accepted are that PD should build teacher skills, knowledge and beliefs together. It should be coordinated by a skilled and knowledgeable facilitator with a focus on what teachers identify as needs in their everyday work and practices. It should take place in a collegial learning community of mutual respect and long-term relationships, embedded in the classroom rather than being separate and punctual. It should begin from participants beliefs, knowledge and practices.

These summations were helpful to a point. Research has shown for decades how difficult it is for student-teachers to change deeply held conceptions about teaching and learning; the same holds true for classroom teachers. I have returned to the missive from PD best practices research regularly: begin from where teachers (and student teachers) are at. But how do we know “where they are at” to begin? This seemingly impossible task became much clearer to me during this study. The framework I developed to analyze the multitude of data I collected helped me identify and understand overlapping and intersecting beliefs systems and

knowledge from societal, historical, institutional and individual perspectives. That analysis helped me map out “where the teachers were at” as well as where the MINED was at – and why.

This understanding of where teachers were at from a cultural and multi-layered perspective will be the basis for developing research-based proposals regarding where PD could begin, how, and with whom – towards what goals. The PD best practice that it be long-term and not short-term recognizes the importance of this approach as well. PD that occurs over time provides many opportunities for PD facilitators to develop nuanced and complex understandings of where teachers are at, where they have come from, how different understandings have developed and persist, and thus how to approach PD and how to measure any change it guides. PD can learn from and embrace an ethnographic approach.

This study also points to the need to understand beliefs systems and knowledge that are embedded in curricular materials and PD instruction. The teachers in this study struggled with the politicized nature of their PD, the content of certain values imposed upon them, the disconnect between what the MINED demanded outside of PD and what it offered as knowledge in PD, and the MINED’s ignorance of anti-values behaviors in the classroom. Embracing an understanding of macro and micro beliefs systems, in addition to those research has deemed relevant to teacher beliefs in schooling, PD may be much more successful. Its long-term nature as a best practice provides the time and multiple opportunities to identify societal, institutional and individual beliefs that are relevant to participating teachers – which then expands PD discussions, foci and teaching-learning opportunities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

La Culpa de Todo en la Educación

Quiero compartir con ustedes un diálogo imaginado por un padre que participó de una reunión que tuvo en el colegio. En la reunión surgió una polémica entre padres y docentes acerca de lo poco y mal que estudian los alumnos: ¿de quién es la culpa?

A la salida de una reunión se produce el siguiente cambio de opiniones...

- -La culpa de todo la tiene el Ministro de Educación - dijo uno.
- -¡No, señor! - dijo el Ministro de Educación, mientras salía de una reunión de gabinete. La culpa la tienen los maestros, que no cumplen con los 180 días de clase.
- -¡Mentiras! - dijo un sindicalista, mientras fijaba la fecha de la próxima huelga. La culpa la tiene el Ministro de Economía, al que no le importa el presupuesto educativo.
- -¡Es inexacto! - dijo el Ministro de Economía, antes de salir en avión a Estados Unidos - La culpa la tienen los educadores, que en lo único que piensan es en los tres meses de vacaciones y en ir a la carpa a comer un plato de ñoquis.
- -¡Infamia! - dijo un docente, mientras juntaba monedas para ir de un colegio a otro - La culpa la tiene el rector, que no nos defiende ni tiene las cosas claras.
- -¡No es cierto!, dijo el rector, mientras atendía las quejas de una madre con respecto a una maestra. La culpa la tienen los padres, que no controlan a sus hijos para que estudien.
- -¡Nada que ver! - dijo un padre, mientras veía a Tinelli - La culpa la tiene la televisión, que aturde y estupidiza a los niños.
- -¡Se equivoca! - dijo una animadora de programas para niños y adolescentes, mientras leía con errores lo que le hacían decir con un cartel detrás de las cámaras - La culpa la tienen los docentes, les falta imaginación.
- -¡Calumnias! - dijo una profesora, mientras fotocopiaba la misma planificación de hace 4 años - La culpa la tienen los legisladores, porque este sistema educativo es del siglo pasado y lo único que hicieron es votar la ley.
- -¡Patañas! - dijo un diputado, mientras preguntaba dónde quedaba el Congreso - La culpa la tienen los docentes que todavía discuten si la educación debe ser estatal o privada, libre o laica y se reúnen para hablar de la Ley Federal y criticarla.
- -Si me buscan me van a encontrar - dijo una profesora, con un viejo bolillero en la mano - La culpa la tienen los preceptores, que no saben imponer disciplina en el colegio.

- -Pero... ¡por favor! - dijo un preceptor, mientras conversaba amigablemente con un alumno que acababa de insultar a una profesora - La culpa la tiene el jefe de preceptores que...

- -¡Terminado! - dijo el jefe mientras cambiaba los horarios de los profesores sin consultarlos. - La culpa la tiene todo este papelerío de secretaría, que no nos deja trabajar en lo nuestro.

- -¡Se van para atrás!- dijo la secretaria, mientras colgaba el tubo semiderretido del teléfono - La culpa la tienen los chicos de hoy, que no les importa nada de nada.

- -¡Ustedes están del tomate! - dijo un alumno mientras encendía un cigarrillo en el aula - La culpa de todo en la educación la tienen los adultos, que nos dan un mal ejemplo.

- -¡Chantas! - dijo un señor mayor mientras se adelantaba todo lo que podía en la cola del banco - La culpa la tienen esos músicos degenerados que dan mal ejemplo.

- -Pero... ¡Qué te pasa, loco! - dijo un rockero, mientras se ponía el quinto aro en la oreja - La culpa la tienen los profesores represores, que hace que no se banque el estudio.

- -¡Otra vez con nosotros! - dijo un profesor, mientras se llevaba 400 pruebas para corregir esa noche - La culpa la tiene el país, que no ofrece oportunidades ni futuro a los jóvenes.

- -¡Paren la mano! - dijo el kiosquero del colegio, mientras depositaba en el banco. -Yo sé quién tiene la culpa de todo en la educación: la culpa la tiene el otro.

- -¡El otro tiene la culpa! ¡Eso!- exclamaron todos a coro- Tiene razón. La culpa la tiene el otro.

Downloaded from <http://www.fmmeduccion.com.ar/Humor/culpaeduca.htm>

APPENDIX B

Nicaragua's Education Crisis in Tables and Graphs

Table B.1. Supply of Schools by Program, Geographic Area and Poverty Levels, Year 2007

Área y Nivel de Pobreza	CEDA ^{1/}	Preescolar	Primaria	Secundaria	Centros Escolares ^{2/}	Proporción (%)		
						Preescolar	Primaria	Secundaria
Rural	24	5.644	7.251	525	9.224	61,2	78,6	5,7
Extrema	13	1.828	3.400	163	4.026	45,4	84,5	4,0
Alta	2	1.481	1.598	97	2.152	68,8	74,3	4,5
Media	2	1.263	1.269	87	1.702	74,2	74,6	5,1
Baja	7	1.072	984	178	1.344	79,8	73,2	13,2
Urbana	103	1.901	1.329	788	2.378	79,9	55,9	33,1
Extrema	17	222	163	93	311	71,4	52,4	29,9
Alta	14	178	128	74	251	70,9	51,0	29,5
Media	15	215	142	81	284	75,7	50,0	28,5
Baja	57	1.286	896	540	1.532	83,9	58,5	35,2
Nicaragua	127	7.545	8.580	1.313	11.602	65,0	74,0	11,3
Extrema	30	2.050	3.563	256	4.337	47,3	82,2	5,9
Alta	16	1.659	1.726	171	2.403	69,0	71,8	7,1
Media	17	1.478	1.411	168	1.986	74,4	71,0	8,5
Baja	64	2.358	1.880	718	2.876	82,0	65,4	25,0

1/ Educación Especial

2/ La suma de programas individuales no es igual a la suma del total ya que existen centros con programas múltiples

Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos del MINED

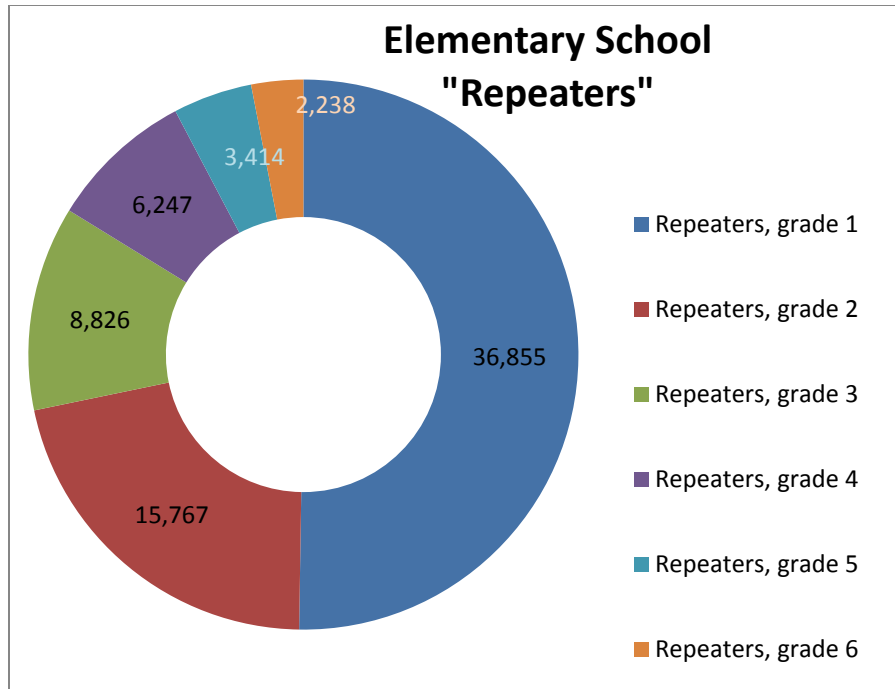
Source: Cuthbert, 2011

Table B.2. Schooling Coverage by Students Attending and Not Attending School, 2007

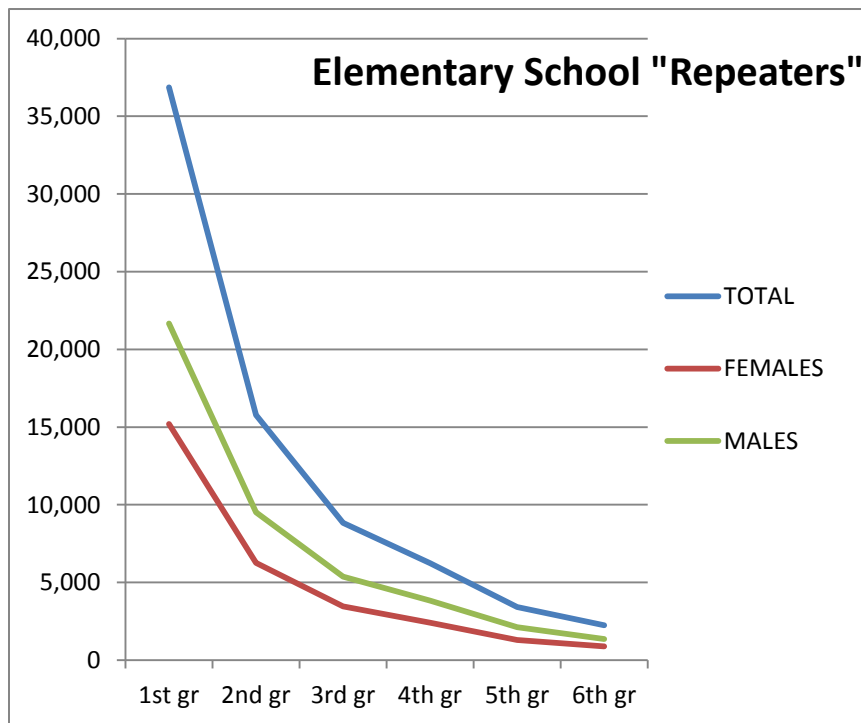
Área y Nivel de Pobreza	Asiste a Escuela		Total	Porcentajes	
	Sí	No		Sí	No
Rural	425.929	329.396	755.325	56,4	43,6
Extrema	107.468	115.076	222.544	48,3	51,7
Alta	113.440	92.045	205.485	55,2	44,8
Media	87.644	54.841	142.485	61,5	38,5
Baja	117.377	67.434	184.811	63,5	36,5
Urbana	322.679	121.063	443.742	72,7	27,3
Extrema	29.539	15.308	44.847	65,9	34,1
Alta	46.845	19.625	66.470	70,5	29,5
Media	69.268	25.742	95.010	72,9	27,1
Baja	177.027	60.388	237.415	74,6	25,4
Nicaragua	748.608	450.459	1.199.067	62,4	37,6
Extrema	137.007	130.384	267.391	51,2	48,8
Alta	160.285	111.670	271.955	58,9	41,1
Media	156.912	80.583	237.495	66,1	33,9
Baja	294.404	127.822	422.226	69,7	30,3

Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos del MINED

Source: Cuthbert, 2011



Graph B.1 Elementary School "Repeaters" by Grade, UNESCO data.



Graph B.2. Elementary School "Repeaters" by Grade and Sex, UNESCO data.

Table B.3. Number and rates of students passing their grade, by rural-urban geographic areas

Área y Nivel de Pobreza	Matrícula		Aprobados	Porcentajes	
	Inicial	Final		Retención	Aprobación
Rural	768.872	668.583	592.519	87,0	88,6
Extrema	299.100	246.365	216.066	82,4	87,7
Alta	145.853	130.405	115.352	89,4	88,5
Media	143.153	129.852	116.305	90,7	89,6
Baja	180.766	161.961	144.796	89,6	89,4
Urbana	843.813	741.707	669.055	87,9	90,2
Extrema	102.353	86.893	77.736	84,9	89,5
Alta	81.941	73.752	67.396	90,0	91,4
Media	101.695	91.217	82.558	89,7	90,5
Baja	557.824	489.845	441.365	87,8	90,1
Nicaragua	1.612.685	1.410.290	1.261.574	87,4	89,5
Extrema	401.453	333.258	293.802	83,0	88,2
Alta	227.794	204.157	182.748	89,6	89,5
Media	244.848	221.069	198.864	90,3	90,0
Baja	738.590	651.806	586.161	88,2	89,9

Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos del MINED

Source: Cuthbert, 2011

APPENDIX C

Interview questions in English

About teaching—

1. Tell me about a good teaching day (describe it). What do you think is important for me as a teacher from the United States to know / understand about teaching in your school? What do you think is important for me to know / understand about learning in your school? [in your classroom, where pertinent]
2. What do you think about the curriculum for multigrade classrooms? How do you decide what to teach and what not to teach? How do you manage curriculum and the allotted hours of instruction?)
3. What do you think is most important for students to know / have learned when they leave your classroom? When they leave your school? How do values and beliefs figure into that?
4. What kinds of behaviors are important for students to learn before they leave your classroom? When they leave your school?
5. For you, what is a “good” student? (Why? Describe what they do and do not do) – *other language could be “successful” student*
6. What does paying attention mean? Describe a student who is paying attention. What kinds of things are they doing and not doing?
7. What does listening mean? How do you know when students are listening? Not listening?
8. Describe a “bad” student, What does a bad student do? What does a bad student not do? – *other language could be “unsuccessful” student*
About work with student—
9. For you, what is a “good” teacher? (Why? Describe)
10. A “bad” teacher?
(optional wording: successful/unsuccessful)
11. What is your role as teacher in the lives of your students?
12. For you, what are the most important things a student needs to learn in elementary school?
13. What do you appreciate most about your work with the students or at the school? With family members?

14. Describe an exceptionally successful experience you have had while teaching (with students, family, colleagues). What did you do to help make it so successful?
15. Describe an exceptionally challenging experience you have had while teaching. What did you do to address the issues you faced?
16. What would you change about your day to day teaching? Why?
About rural schools and classrooms—
17. In what ways are rural multi-grade classrooms and education similar to a regular rural classroom and education?
18. Describe how a rural multi-grade classroom and education differs from a regular rural classroom and education. How do you think these differences affect students? How do they affect teachers?
19. Why are the 3rd and 4th grades important?
20. What do you think is important for me as a teacher from the United States to know / understand about teaching in rural Nicaragua? In multi-grade classrooms?

About the MINED and teaching –

21. The MINED talks a lot about relevance and education quality. What does relevance in education mean to you? What is relevant content? Describe two or three of the teaching strategies you use regularly with your students. (follow-up: Why do you use these? How do you see these strategies working for your students in your classroom?)
22. The MINED talks about what it calls “a quality education” and “a traditional memoristic education.” What are they talking about? They also talk a lot about constructivism. Tell me about constructivism.
23. If you could change two things in the teaching profession, what would they be?

Interview protocol for family members

1. What do you want your son or daughter to learn at school?
2. What does a young person who finishes elementary school have that a young person who drops out of elementary school not have? [Is it important to receive an elementary school education? Why?]
3. Why is it important to read? Why is it important to write? When does your son or daughter read the most? When does your son/daughter write the most? Where else might they read or write?

4. What kinds of behaviors are important for students to learn at school?
5. Do you consider your son/daughter a successful student? Why/why not?
6. What characteristics do you think are important for a teacher to have to be successful with your son or daughter?
7. What kinds of behaviors are important for a teacher to be a good teacher?
8. Would you like to see anything changed at your son's/daughter's school? What? Why?

Interview protocol for MINED and Non-Governmental Organizations in education

1. What do you think is important for me as a teacher from the United States to know / understand about teaching in rural Nicaragua? In multi-grade classrooms?
2. What do you think about the curriculum for multigrade classrooms? How do teachers decide what to teach and what not to teach? How does the MINED guide them in this process? (follow-up: How do you help teachers manage the allotted hours of instruction with the curriculum?)
3. What do you think is most important for students to know / have learned when they leave elementary school? How do values and beliefs figure into that?
4. What kinds of behaviors are important for students to learn before they leave elementary school? Are there certain behaviors that are very important to learn in the early elementary years that help students be successful in the later elementary years and high school?
5. For you, what is a “good” student? (Why? Describe what they do and do not do) – *other language could be “successful” student*
6. What does paying attention mean? Describe a student who is paying attention? What kinds of things are they doing and not doing?
7. What does listening mean? How do you know when students are listening? Not listening?
8. Describe a “bad” student, What does a bad student do? What does a bad student not do? – *other language could be “unsuccessful” student*

About work with student—

9. For you, what is a “good” teacher? (Why? Describe)

10. A “bad” teacher?
(optional wording: successful/unsuccessful)
11. The MINED and some NGOs accompany teachers in their classrooms. Tell me about a good teaching day you have observed or participated in (describe it). What about a challenging teaching day that was not successful?
12. What is the role of the teacher in the lives of her/his students?
13. What are the most important things a student needs to learn in elementary school?
14. Describe how a rural multi-grade classroom and education differs from a regular rural classroom and education. How do you think these differences affect students? How do they affect teachers?
15. Why are the 3rd and 4th grades important?
16. The MINED talks a lot about relevance and education quality. What does relevance in education mean to you? What is relevant content? Describe two or three teaching strategies that are used regularly with students in rural classrooms in this region. (follow-up: How do you see these strategies working for students in rural classrooms?)
17. The MINED talks about what it calls “a quality education” and “a traditional memoristic education.” What does this mean? They also talk a lot about constructivism. Tell me about constructivism and how it is taken into account in rural multigrade classrooms.
18. If you could change two things in the teaching profession, what would they be?
19. Describe an exceptionally successful experience you have had with teachers in rural multigrade classrooms. What about successful changes in the MINED/NGO?
20. Describe an exceptionally challenging experience you have had with teachers. Within the MINED/NGO?

Interview questions in Spanish

Preguntas para Profesoras y Profesores

Sobre la enseñanza:

1. Cuénteme sobre un buen día en el aula, un buen día de enseñanza (describalo).
2. ¿Qué piensa sobre el currículo o programa de estudios para las aulas multigrados de básica? ¿Cómo decide que partes del programa de estudios se enseñarán y que partes no se enseñarán? ¿Cómo maneja los requisitos del programa de estudios y las horas estipuladas de instrucción?
3. ¿Qué es lo más importante que los estudiantes deberían saber o aprender antes de salir de su aula al fin de año? ¿Antes de salir de básica, o sea sexto grado? ¿Dónde entran valores y creencias? ¿Cuáles?
4. ¿Qué comportamientos deberían aprender los estudiantes antes de salir de su aula?
¿Del centro escolar?
5. Para usted, ¿qué es un “buen” estudiante o alumno? ¿Por qué? (Describe que hacen y no hacen.) – otra palabra podría ser estudiante “exitoso”
6. ¿Qué significa para usted “poner atención?” Describe un o una estudiante que pone atención. Describe lo que un o una estudiante hace y no hace cuando pone atención.
7. ¿Qué significa “escuchar?” ¿Cuándo sabe usted que los estudiantes están escuchando? ¿Cuándo no están escuchando?
8. Describe un “mal” estudiante o alumno. ¿Qué hace? ¿Qué no hace? – otra palabra podría ser estudiante “no exitoso”
9. Para usted, ¿qué es una buena profesora o profesor? ¿Por qué?
10. ¿Qué es un “mal” profesor o profesora? ¿Por qué?
11. ¿Qué es su papel como Profesora en las vidas de sus estudiantes?
12. Para usted, ¿que son las cosas más importantes que los estudiantes tienen que aprender en básica?
13. ¿Qué es lo que aprecias más sobre su trabajo con los estudiantes? ¿Con los padres de familia?
14. Describe una experiencia muy exitosa que usted ha tenido como parte de su trabajo de profesora (con estudiantes, padres de familia, colegas).

15. Describe una experiencia que era muy difícil en su trabajo de profesora (con estudiantes, padres de familia, colegas). ¿Qué hizo para enfrentar los aspectos más críticos de dicha situación?
16. ¿Qué cambiaría en su trabajo diario? Por qué? (en centros escolares rurales, en las aulas)
17. ¿En cuáles formas son similares las aulas y educación rural multigrado con las aulas de grado único en la educación rural?
18. Describe como las aulas rurales multigrado son diferentes que las aulas rurales de grado único. ¿Cómo cree que estas diferencias afectan a los estudiantes? ¿Cómo cree que estas diferencias afectan a los Profesores?
19. ¿Por qué son importantes 3º y 4º grados?
20. ¿Qué piensa usted que es de suma importancia que entendiera yo como educadora de los Estados Unidos sobre la enseñanza en las escuelas rurales en Nicaragua? En las aulas multi-grado? (Ejemplos específicos)

Sobre el MINED y la enseñanza –

21. El MINED habla bastante sobre relevancia y calidad educativa. ¿Qué significa relevancia en la educación para usted?
Dame unos ejemplos de las estrategias de enseñanza que usted utiliza en seguido en el aula con sus estudiantes. (¿Por qué utiliza estas? ¿Cómo funcionan con todos los estudiantes en su aula?)
22. El MINED habla de lo que se llama “una educación de calidad” y “una educación tradicional memorística.” ¿De qué están hablando? También hablan de constructivismo. Explícame un poco sobre constructivismo.
23. Si pudiera cambiar dos aspectos o cosas en la profesión docente, ¿qué serían? ¿Por qué?

Preguntas para Familiares de Estudiantes

1. ¿Qué quiere que su hijo o hija aprenda en la escuela?
2. ¿Qué tiene un joven o una joven que termina su educación básica que un joven que ha dejado de estudiar en básica no tiene? [¿Es importante recibir una educación de primaria? ¿Por qué?]
3. ¿Por qué es importante leer? ¿Por qué es importante escribir? ¿Cuándo lee su hijo o hija? ¿Cuándo escribe su hijo o hija? ¿En cuáles otros lugares podría leer y escribir?

4. ¿Qué comportamientos deberían aprender los estudiantes en la escuela?
5. ¿Considera usted que su hijo/hija es exitoso/a en la escuela? ¿Por qué?
6. ¿Qué características deberían tener un profesor o profesora para que puedan tener éxito enseñando a su hijo o hija?
7. ¿Qué comportamientos son importantes para ser un buen profesor o profesora?
8. ¿Le gustaría ver algo cambiar en el centro escolar de su hijo/hija? ¿Qué?

Preguntas para MINED/NGO

1. ¿Qué piensa usted que es de suma importancia que entendiera yo como educadora de los Estados Unidos sobre la enseñanza en las escuelas rurales en Nicaragua? En las aulas multi-grado? (Ejemplos específicos)
2. ¿Qué piensa sobre el currículo o programa de estudios para las aulas multigrados de básica? ¿Cómo deciden los profesores sobre qué partes del programa de estudios enseñarán y que partes no enseñarán? ¿Cómo maneja los requisitos del programa de estudios y las horas estipuladas de instrucción?
3. ¿Qué es lo más importante que los estudiantes deberían saber o aprender antes de salir de básica, o sea, sexto grado? ¿Dónde entran valores y creencias? ¿Cuáles?
4. ¿Qué comportamientos deberían aprender los estudiantes antes de salir de su aula? ¿Del centro escolar? ¿Hay comportamientos que son importantes que aprendan los estudiantes en los primeros años de básica para ser exitoso en los últimos años de básica y bachillerato?
5. Para usted, ¿qué es un “buen” estudiante o alumno? ¿Por qué? (Describe que hacen y no hacen.) – otra palabra podría ser estudiante “exitoso”
6. ¿Qué significa para usted “poner atención?” Describe un o una estudiante que pone atención. Describe lo que un o una estudiante hace y no hace cuando pone atención.
7. ¿Qué significa “escuchar?” ¿Cuándo sabe usted que los estudiantes están escuchando? ¿Cuándo no están escuchando?
8. Describe un “mal” estudiante o alumno. ¿Qué hace? ¿Qué no hace? – otra palabra podría ser estudiante “no exitoso”

Sobre el trabajo con los estudiantes:

9. Para usted, ¿qué es una buena profesora o un buen profesor? ¿Por qué?
10. ¿Qué es un “mal” profesor o profesora? ¿Por qué?
11. El MINED y algunas ONGs acompañan a los profesores en sus aulas. Cuéntame sobre un buen día de enseñanza y aprendizaje que ha observado o en lo cual ha participado (describalo). ¿Y un día difícil que no era exitoso?
12. ¿Qué es el papel de un profesor o profesora en las vidas de sus estudiantes?
13. Para usted, ¿qué son las cosas más importantes que los estudiantes tienen que aprender en básica?
14. ¿En cuáles formas son diferentes las aulas y educación rural multigrado con las aulas de grado único en la educación rural? ¿Cómo cree que estas diferencias afectan a los estudiantes? ¿Cómo cree que estas diferencias afectan a los Profesores?
15. ¿Por qué son importantes 3º y 4º grados?

Sobre el MINED y la enseñanza –

16. El MINED habla bastante sobre relevancia y calidad educativa. ¿Qué significa relevancia en la educación para usted? ¿Qué es contenido relevante? Dame unos ejemplos de dos o tres estrategias de enseñanza que se utilizan en forma consistente en las aulas rurales en esta región. (¿Cómo funcionan con todos los estudiantes en las aulas rurales?)
17. El MINED habla de lo que se llama “una educación de calidad” y “una educación tradicional memorística.” ¿Qué significa esto? También hablan de constructivismo. Explícame un poco sobre constructivismo y como se toma en cuenta en las aulas rurales multigrado.
18. Si pudiera cambiar dos aspectos o cosas en la profesión docente, ¿qué serían? ¿Por qué?
19. Describe una experiencia muy exitosa que ha tenido con profesores rurales de multigrado. Describe unos cambios exitosos que se han visto en el MINED (y en la ONG).
20. Describe una experiencia muy difícil (no exitosa) que ha tenido con profesores rurales de multigrado. Adentro del MINED (la ONG)?

APPENDIX D

Teaching Values as Academic Content: One Lesson

Profe Emilia copied a list of values and definitions provided by a local NGO onto the board for her students to copy into their notebooks. These included the following (exactly as it appeared on the board):

- 1 What is solidarity?
- 2 Community of solidarity interests exa (sic) to help other people.
- 3
- 4 What is convivencia?
- 5 To live in the company of others. it (sic) obliges us to understand others, to listen and
- 6 to
- 7 say what we think in an opportune way
- 8
- 9 What is companerismo?
- 10 Harmony and link between companeros that is practiced every day in the classroom
- 11 exa (sic) is to help our companeros.
- 12
- 13 What is anniversary holiday?
- 14 comemoration (sic) of a notable event
- 15
- 16 What is environment?
- 17 It is everything that surrounds us (sic) the natural and that which has been created by
- 18 man.
- 19
- 20 What is citizenship?
- 21 community where we live (no punctuation)
- 22
- 23 What is responsibility?
- 24 Obligation to respond to the consequence (sic) of actions taken.
- 25
- 26 What are customs?
- 27 habitual way of acting or conducting oneself
- 28 “they are habits acquired through constant repetition of acts” (no punctuation or
- 29 citation)
- 30
- 31 What is honesty?
- 32 decent person
- 33
- 34 What are traditions?
- 35 It is the oral transmission (sic) of rites, (sic) or customs, traditions, made (sic) from
- 36 one generation to another.

- 36 What is justice?
 37 it is a value that tends to give each person what belongs to them
 38
 39 What is equality?
 40 Agreement of one thing without separation
 41
 42 What is patriotism?
 43 A group of people who love their country
 44
 45 What is respect?
 46 It is the most important value that all people need to achieve what we want⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁸ ¿Que es solidaridad? Comunidad de intereses solidario ejm ayudar a las demas personas. Que es convivencia? Vivir en compañía de otros. nos obliga a comprender a los demás, escuchar y decir lo que pensamos de manera oportuna. Que es compañerismo? Armonia y vinculo (sic) entre compañeros que se practican todo los días en al aula de clases eje es ayudar a nuestros compañeros. Qué es efemérides? conmemoracion (sic) de un acontecimiento notable. Qué es medio ambiente? Es todo lo que nos rodea lo natural lo que ha sido creado por el hombre. Qué es ciudadanía? comunidad donde vivimos. ¿Que es responsabilidad? Obligacion de responder a las consecuencia (sic) de accion realizadas. Qué son costumbres? modo habitual de proceder o conducirse “son habitos adquiridos por la repeticion constante de actos” (no period, no citation). Qué es honestidad? persona decente. Qué son tradiciones? Es (sic) la trasmicion (sic) oral de ritos, (sic) o costumbres, tradiciones, echos (sic) de una generacion (sic) a otra. Qué es justicia? es un valor que inclina a dar a cada uno lo que le pertenece.

APPENDIX E

Profe Regalia, Assembly Talk, Spanish

Yo he entrado en el aula de la Profe [Ambrosia] y hay estudiantes peleando, gritando, empujando uno a otro, no poniendo nadita de atención a la lección, no haciendo su trabajo. Algunos de esos estudiantes estaban conmigo el año pasado. Y cuando llegan al Quinto [grado] dicen que no pueden hacer sus tablas o dividir. Pero, ¿quién tiene la culpa? ¿Quién tiene la culpa cuando los alumnos no hacen sus tareas en casa? ¿Quién tiene la culpa cuando los alumnos no ponen atención?

Yo me mato gritando a estudiantes para que se sienten y pongan atención. Doy un contenido y el próximo día nadie recuerda lo que hicimos. Creen que eso se siente bien? Es decepcionante. Se decepciona a uno. La insolencia. La falta de respeto...

Y otra cosa es las constantes salidas para la letrina. Entrenan a sus cuerpos! Ustedes no me ven a mi saliendo del aula a cada ratito para ir a la letrina. Es porque he entrenado mi cuerpo. No acá. “¡Profe!” a la letrina. “¡Profe!” a la letrina. A aquellos que van sin pedir permiso, tres, cuatro, cinco veces en un par de horas. Y se quedan afuera para un buen rato, grupos de estudiantes supuestamente en la letrina. Por fin regresan al aula y dentro de poquito, “¡Profe! Tengo que ir a la letrina.”

Y como Profesora tienes que dejar que salgan a los estudiantes porque uno tu imaginas que si no, ellos van a orinar por todo el aula. No es porque quieres que se vayan. Es porque no puedes (pausa). Yo tengo niños que hacen esto (she crosses her right leg in front of and top of the left leg, clutching at her crotch area), “¡Profe! ¡Profe!” Claro que tengo que dejarles ir.

Y otra cosa son las ausencias. La Profe [Ambrosia] no esta aquí porque esta enferma. Nunca esta ausente por otras razones. Yo casi nunca dejo de llegar para dar clase. Estoy enferma pero no la dejo saber. Todavía estoy enferma pero no la muestro. Tengo dolores pero llego aquí todos los días porque tengo que hacerlo. Pero los alumnos. Hay estudiantes que no llegan para semanas enteras, o que salen temprano cada día, o que llegan a la hora que le de la ganas.

Todos ustedes son estudiantes, y por eso les llaman estudiantes. Tus padres no les han puesto a trabajar, verdad? No, vienen a clase cada día para aprender y estudiar. Y eso es otra cosa. Cuantos alumnos hacen sus tareas? A veces tengo uno o dos estudiantes de los dos grados que viene a la escuela con sus tareas hechas. Y entonces, tengo que dedicar tiempo a esa porque nadie la hizo en casa. Y eso me atrasa en lo planificado. Y eso es mi culpa? No, son los estudiantes que me atrasan.

APPENDIX F

First Lady Murillo's "Live Pretty" Campaign Guide



Gobierno de Reconciliación
y Unidad Nacional

El Pueblo, Presidente!



VIVIR LIMPIO, VIVIR SANO, VIVIR BONITO,

VIVIR BIEN... !

Nos invitamos, nos convocamos, a trabajar junt@s, a aprender junt@s, nicaragüenses de todas las generaciones, para transformar nuestra Cultura de la Vida Cotidiana, poniendo los énfasis indispensables en la coherencia entre lo que somos, lo que pensamos, y lo que hacemos.

Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien... ! Significa para cada un@ de nosotr@s, emprender junt@s una serie de Acciones simples, sencillas, diarias, que vayan incorpo-rándonos a una Conciencia de Responsabilidad Compartida y Complementaria sobre el País que soñamos, y el País, la Sociedad, la Comunidad, la Familia y el Ser Humano, que queremos re-crear para Bien. Para Mejor. Para que Nicaragua continúe siendo Ejemplo Iluminado, de Idiosincrasia, Identidad, Inteligencia, Sensibilidad y Prácticas, que desde el corazón representen contribución esencial al Mundo Mejor que entre tod@s estamos obligad@s a hacer posible.

Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien... ! Es una fórmula y muchas fórmulas que apuntan a la sencillez, a la moderación, al Equilibrio, a la racionalidad, a la comprensión del deber ciudadano y del deber de las Instituciones, del Estado, y la Cooperación Complementaria de las Iglesias, de la Empresa Privada, l@s Productor@s, de juntar Esfuerzos, Fuerzas, Voluntades y Compromisos, para recrear la Vida en este Siglo XXI, de desafíos inéditos y de aprendizajes imprescindibles, no para sobrevivir, sino para lograr llenar de sentido y significado todos los ámbitos de la Existencia Personal, Familiar, Comunitaria y Social.



CRISTIANA, SOCIALISTA, SOLIDARIA!
BUEN GOBIERNO!

CONSEJO DE COMUNICACIÓN Y CIUDADANÍA

Porque debemos estar tod@s compenetrad@s de la importancia de nuestros vínculos, de nuestros afectos, de nuestros lazos, y del valor que cada un@ de nosotr@s tiene en el empeño de salvar el Planeta y asegurar Sociedades Armoniosas, Justas, Saludables, Dignas, Prósperas, Contentas, Seguras, Sostenibles. Porque debemos pro-mover que las personas sepamos encontrar la Felicidad en los Valores, en los lazos afectivos, en la Cultura, el Espíritu, la Ciencia y los Bienes Materiales compartidos, como mandata toda Filosofía Humanista, Idealista, Ética y Evolucionaria. Como mandatan, además, nuestras Creencias y Querencias, nuestra Alma de Pueblo Libre, Valiente, Noble, lleno de Fé.

GUIA BASICA PARA VIVIR LIMPIO, VIVIR SANO, VIVIR BONITO, VIVIR BIEN...!

1. Aprendamos junt@s desde la Familia, la Comunidad, la Escuela, con el acompañamiento, la promoción y facilitación de las Instituciones del Estado, las Iglesias, la Em-presa Privada, l@s Productor@s, Normas sencillas y prácticas de Convivencia entre nosotr@s; entre nosotr@s, la Naturaleza y la Madre Tierra; y entre Espacios Familiares y Comunitarios, Públicos y Privados, donde observemos Limpieza, Higiene, Orden, Estética, Respeto, Cuido Amoroso y Solidaridad Permanente.
2. Aprendamos junt@s, acompañémonos tod@s en el Aprendizaje y en las Prácticas de Unidad Fraternal, Familiar, Comunitaria, Social, Municipal, Urbana, Rural; aprendamos junt@s a vivir con Afecto, con Salud, en condiciones limpias, dignas, bonitas. Pongamos lo mejor de nosotr@s mism@s para la Participación Personal, Familiar y Comunitaria en todos los emprendimientos que posibiliten Mejorar, Progresar, Prosperar, con Dignidad, Equidad y Alegría.

Garanticemos Restitución de Derechos; observemos y cultivemos comunicación tolerante entre nosotr@s, y cumplamos las Normas básicas de Respeto a la Vida. Eduquémonos junt@s para tener Hogares y Comunidades, Seguras, Sanas, Limpias, Bonitas, llenas de Espíritu, de Capacidad de Convivencia, de Cariño y Solidaridad.

3. Garanticemos Hogares y Comunidades, Espacios Públicos y Comunitarios, Instituciones Públicas y de Servicio, limpias, saludables, bonitas, que ofrezcan la mejor imagen de nosotr@s mism@s, de nuestra Estima y Auto-Estima Nacional; Hogares y Comunidades que correspondan con el Ambiente y la Conciencia, Individual y Colectiva, de una Nicaragua, Linda y Libre, Alegre de Vivir en Paz; Tranquila y en condiciones de crear Prosperidad.

Respondamos en todo momento a las Creencias y Querencias propias de un Pueblo Honrado, Creativo, Laborioso, con Valores. Somos un Pueblo Orgulloso de nuestra Historia, de nuestro Trabajo, de nuestra Creatividad, Talento y Tradición. Somos orgullosos de nuestra Cultura, nuestras Comidas, nuestra Religiosidad, y nuestras Bellezas Patrimoniales. Con cariño nos corresponde resguardar todo ese legado, para el disfrute de hoy, y de mañana.

4. Sembremos árboles, plantas, huertos, hierbas de cocina y medicinales, en todos los espacios urbanos, sub-urbanos y de Vivienda Rural, de manera que apuntemos a cuidar y restaurar a nuestra Madre Tierra y a cuidarnos nosotr@s mismos, consumiendo lo que producimos localmente, abasteciéndonos, en gran parte, de temporada en temporada, de una producción local saludable, que también fortalezca Buenas Prácticas de Agricultura Familiar y Comunitaria.

Así estaremos consolidando la Salud de la Madre Tierra y de todas las generaciones de nicaragienses, que sabemos vivir con Fé. L@s nicaragienses vivimos con Valores. Con Cariño expresado en fuertes vínculos con la Madre Tierra. En Vínculos de Familia. En lazos de Comunidad, Cultura, Religiosidad y Tradición, así como de nuestra propia Cultura Culinaria, Herbolaria, Medicinal, y de Alimentación. Tenemos tanta riqueza cultural que nos toca admirar, cuidar y conservar como Tesoro.

5. Respetemos, cumplamos, y motivémonos a hacer cumplir, las orientaciones e indicaciones de las Autoridades Nacionales y Locales, Ambientales, Educativas, de Salud Pública, de Agricultura Sostenible, Producción y Comercio Justos, de Prevención y Atención de Desastres, y todo lo que represente Derechos y Capacidades incrementados, para afianzar Rutas y Alianzas de Justicia Social y Prosperidad. Resguardemos siempre la Vida, la Salud, la Seguridad y el Bienestar de todos los Seres que habitamos nuestra Nicaragua.

6. Protejamos y mantengamos tod@s junt@s los Espacios y Bienes de la Comunidad, o de nuestro uso Comunitario. Parques, Escuelas, Centros de Salud, Centros de Esparcimiento Familiar, Edificios de Servicio Público, Redes de Agua, Saneamiento, Eléctricas y de Comunicaciones; Transporte Colectivo, Calles, Plazas.

Protejamos también, y mantengamos limpias todas las áreas de vulnerabilidad ambiental. Protejamos y mantengamos limpios cauces y lugares de almacenamiento. Aseguremos en cada Hogar, Comunidad e Instituciones, conocimiento, participación y cumplimiento, de y en, todos los Planes, Campañas y Prácticas de Salud, de Vida con hábitos Saludables, de Educación Ciudadana, de Resguardo Ambiental, de Limpieza y Embellecimiento.

Trabajemos integralmente, junto a la Policía Nacional, el Ministerio y los Gabinetes de la Familia, los Sacerdotes y Pastores, la Seguridad Familiar, Comunitaria y Ciudadana, así como la Prevención y Atención al Irrespeto entre nosotros, a la Violencia Verbal y Física, a la Delincuencia, a la drogadicción, etc.

Organicémonos lo mejor posible, desde la Familia y la Comunidad, para enfrentar los Fenómenos Naturales que provocan Desastres, y para ser Fraternos y Solidarios, cuando éstos se producen.

7. Promovamos la participación informada y vital, de todas las generaciones de nicaragienses, en actividades recreativas, sanas y placenteras, desde la Familia y la Comunidad, desarrollando nuestra Tradición, Religiosidad y Cultura propias.

Contribuyamos a promover Personas y Comunidades comprometidas en Valores, que nos cuidemos todo el tiempo, física y espiritualmente; que evitemos actitudes y conductas violentas, en la Pareja, la Familia, los Hogares y Vecindarios. Combatamos tod@s, desde Valores Familiares, Religiosos, y Culturales, la Violencia contra las Mujeres, l@s Niñ@s, l@s Ancian@s, en las Familias y Comunidades.

Combatamos con Motivación Solidaria, todos los vicios derivados del Exceso, y prevengamos el uso y comercio ilícito de drogas, que nos llevan a perder Salud, Energía de Juventud, Vitalidad y Vida Armoniosa y Plena. Los Excesos y Vicios nos roban el Presente y Futuro de miles de talentos nicaragüenses, y nos toca unir esfuerzos para prevenir y atender esa peste de la llamada “Modernidad”.

8. Sepamos desarrollar nuestra Vialidad, Tránsito, Transporte, Recreación Personal, Familiar y Comunitaria, en consonancia y concordancia con todo lo que estemos aprendiendo, en términos de Respeto, Convivencia, Cariño, **para Vivir Limpio, Sano, Seguro, Bonito y Bien !**

Pensemos en el Derecho nuestro y en el de los demás, a la moderación en los ruidos y sonidos; en las conductas que deben ser respetuosas en vías y espacios públicos; en la responsabilidad que debemos asumir, l@s conductores de transporte, individual y colectivo, sobre la vida de tod@s.

Contribuyamos con Educación, con mejores hábitos y absoluto cumplimiento de las Normas de Tránsito y Policía, a la lucha por disminuir la terrible plaga de accidentes de tránsito, que nos producen tantas pérdidas definitivas, y discapacidades irreparables.

9. Aseguremos el aprendizaje conjunto, a través de todas las formas de Campaña que realicemos para Motivación, Inspiración y Promoción del Derecho **a Vivir Limpio, Sano, Bonito, Bien...**

Todas las Organizaciones y Movimientos Sociales, Estudiantiles, Laborales, Comunitarios, los Medios de Comunicación, las Instituciones, Empresas Privadas, Iglesias... trabajaremos promoviendo, inspirando, comunicando, para crear y conservar Comunidades y Municipios limpios, dignos, saludables, seguros, bonitos, solidarios, en Progreso. Porque nos conviene a cada un@, a tod@s, y nos hace mejores.

Promovamos que en nuestros Municipios y Comunidades, vivamos con Normas de Consumo y de Eliminación de Desechos, que respondan a conductas juiciosas y respetuosas de los Derechos Naturales, Ambientales, Culturales, Personales, Familiares y Comunitarios, que promueven la Nicaragua Linda y Mejor que tod@s queremos.

10. Eduquémonos en el Amor a la Madre Tierra y la Madre Naturaleza, promoviendo la conexión con Ambientes y Áreas Protegidas, así como la creación y el cuidado respetuoso y amoroso, de nuevos Ambientes y Áreas Protegidas, que faciliten ese contacto indispensable entre las Personas y Familias de nuestra Nicaragua, con nuestra bella, rica y variada Flora, Fauna, Cuerpos de Agua, Montañas, Valles, de manera que practiquemos lo que aprendemos teóricamente.

Que nuestra Naturaleza prodigiosa nos inspire a vivir consecuentemente, sin destruirla y sin destruirnos. Aprendamos a ver en la Naturaleza y en los entornos naturales, que sepamos resguardar, Dones de Dios, Templos de reposición de Energías, de renovación de Fuerza y Fortaleza Física, Espiritual, y de Armonía y Comprensión Humana.

11. Promovamos la Identidad Comunitaria y los Valores Cristianos y Familiares, como Eje-Guía de nuestros esfuerzos para una Convivencia Ciudadana Digna, Consciente, Respetuosa, Responsable, Sana, Limpia, Bonita, y Mejor !

Promovamos el ahorro de Agua, Energía y de Servicios que a otr@s todavía les faltan.

Promovamos una Cultura de Vida Sencilla y sin derroche u ostentación, que lastime, excluya o limite a otr@s Herman@s Ciudadan@s.

Rechacemos la humillación por exclusión o prejuicio social, económico, político, religioso, sexual o generacional.

12. Promovamos el estudio, la lectura; promovamos la información de lo que ocurre en el Planeta y en nuestro País. Inspirémonos en las Mejores Luchas y Experiencias de la Humanidad.

Promovamos la Reflexión Permanente, Personal, Familiar, Comunitaria, Institucional, sobre todo lo que nos llene de significado, de Estima y Auto-estima, y fortalezca el desarrollo del Equilibrio, del Talento, la Inteligencia y la Capacidad Personal, para contribuir desde ese reconocimiento de nosotr@s mismos, como Seres Humanos con Valores, al desarrollo en Libertad, Dignidad, Equidad, Justicia, Democracia Plena, en nuestra Nicaragua, Bendita y Siempre Libre.

13. Convirtamos todas estas **Acciones de Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien... !** en una Escuela, una Academia, una Campaña constante de Aprendizaje y Práctica Personal, Familiar y Comunitaria, de la Democracia Directa, que en viva voz se exprese desde las Acciones, las Realizaciones, y la Vida Buena y Mejor que vayamos alcanzando.

14. Fortalezcámonos con Amor y Esperanza, en la Convicción de que vivimos en Unidad, Comunidad, dialogantes, como Herman@s de todas las edades, como Prójimo, como Familia nicaragüense. Sepamos que sólo así podemos crecer en Valores, Conciencia, Cultura, Sociedad, Economía... en Prosperidad Cultural, Material, Espiritual, para realizarnos y realizar los Sueños de la Juventud de todos los Tiempos, y de las Familias nicaragüenses de todas las Épocas.

Vivir Bien, Limpio, Sano, Bonito, és Vivir Alegres, con Salud Mental y Física; Vivir, en todas las Edades, con Amor, son Seguridad, Respeto, Fé y Esperanza; és disfrutar la Paz, creando cada vez mejores condiciones para acercar Más Tranquilidad y Más Prosperidad !

Rosario Murillo

A los 23 días del mes de Enero 2013

Nicaragua : Bendecidos, Prosperados y en Victorias !

Cristiana, Socialista, Solidaria ...

2013 : Buen Gobierno !

[NOTE: The original document was in Courier 16 pica and double-spaced. With such large print and spacing, it was 23 pages in length. Murillo often published documents in large print, double-spaced, with capital letters emphasizing a large number of words. Run-on sentences were common as well. I have only changed the typeface and letter size, keeping the original punctuation and grammar.]

TRANSLATION GLOSSARY OF SPANISH TERMS

brigadista	Brigade member, originally from the revolution then used for promoters in Sandinista programs and campaigns, particularly Sandinista Youth working in brigades across the country.
calidad	quality
cantón/cantones	community demarcation
caudillismo	leadership and governance by a caudillo
caudillo	political boss, strongman (populist) leader
Centro Escolar	School
chavalas	girls
chavalos	boys
chigüín/chigüines	kid/kids
Comandante	Commander
compañero/compañera	companion, colleague, classmate
convivencia	living in community
Cristiano, Socialista, Solidario	Christian, Socialist, Solidarity
Danielista	A person who supports President Daniel Ortega
Delegada/Delegado	Delegate (politically appointed leader at Municipal or State level of the MINED)
departamento	state
diplomado	multi-session professional development that ends with a certification or credit
ejes transversales	cross-curricular pillars
El Roble	El Roble community
El Tejado	El Tejado community
en cadena	when all television and radio stations put the same government programming on at the same time
fascículos	black and white mini-textbooks for multigrade elementary schools
fulano/fulana	so-and-so (male/female)
Guardia/ La Guardia	The National Guard under the dictatorship of the Somoza family. Trained by U.S. Marines in the 1920s and early 1930s to guard U.S. interests in Nicaragua, they became one of the most repressive forces in Central America.
imperio	Empire, often used in the phrase "imperialist empire" for the U.S.
Instituto San Juan de la Montana	San Juan de la Montana High School
La Montanita	La Montañita community
Los Coquitos	Los Coquitos community
Los Jocotes	Los Jocotes community
memoria histórica	historic memory

militante	A proven commitment and thus cadre within the Sandinista Party
municipio	municipality (similar to a county in the U.S.)
nación	nation
orientación/orientaciones	orientation(s)
Orteguismo	The political platform of the Sandinistas under Daniel Ortega
Orteguista	A person who supports President Daniel Ortega
patrón	boss
Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Humano	National Human Development Plan
Profe	short for Professor. Once a Profe, always a Profe.
rector	Head or leader
rural	rural
Sandinista	A political identity with the Sandinista Party (supporter or militant)
Segoviana	A person who hails from a region known as Las Segovias
sensibilizar	to raise awareness or consciousness
simpatizante	One who sympathizes with a political party but is not a militant
Somocista	A person who supports the Somoza era of governance (dictatorship in service of the U.S.)
urbano	urban
valores / anti-valores	values / anti-values
Vivir Bonito	Live Pretty, short-hand for longer campaign name
Vivir Limpio, Vivir Sano, Vivir Bonito, Vivir Bien	Live Clean, Live Healthy, Live Pretty, Live Well
Yanqui	Yankee, a synonym for the U.S., derogatory
Yanqui imperialistas	Yankee imperialists

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Endnotes

ⁱ My hybridity reminds me that my U.S.-guided tendency to dichotomize and label (often with severe and unfounded judgments, like correct/incorrect and good/bad) or assume I have a say in something or want to challenge and discuss things *ad nauseum* stems from culturally formed judgments shared among many in my U.S. context (and white privilege). Among Central American friends and colleagues, these two tendencies are often perceived negatively as they offend and reek of arrogance.

ⁱⁱ The political tendency to applaud (and pay a lot of money for) scripted curricula and other teacher-proof mandates parallels education policies, funding and actions in Central America. The environment – laden with blame, defeatism, and studied institutional ignorance – is similar as well. Families from low income and ethnic/racial and linguistic minority communities feel the brunt of education policies in the U.S., similar to rural families in Nicaragua. In both countries, society and education institutions have created policies, tools (e.g., evaluation systems) and research foci that reinforce the belief that individual teachers are to blame for poor student learning and one only has to identify them to fire or train them better. This focus, apparent in Nicaraguan discourse more than specific actions, effectively closes spaces for critique of systemic contributors and reinforcers as well as institutional gaps in knowledge and other beliefs that would lead to deeper understandings of complex education challenges in and out of the classroom.

ⁱⁱⁱ I made an explicit decision to not report on anything I knew could damage a participating teacher, school or member(s) of a school community. I was an invited guest, not a supervisor or mentor. I documented critical events that involved questionable ethical decisions, analyzed them, and chose not to include them in any public reporting. This decision became final when I realized that most readers in the U.S. have knowledge and beliefs that immediately condemn decisions teachers made without the knowledge or beliefs to try or be able to understand these actions from a completely different perspective, closer to the teachers' reasonings. A common example lies with what nationally and internationally is defined as child abuse, and in many Central American countries is a parent's right and responsibility to discipline their children – a necessity to ensure their survival and development. Other examples include responses to classroom violence and a commitment to leaving children to develop conflict management skills.

^{iv} I will provide three here, briefly. When a young student was terrified to leave school grounds because a group of students was waiting to beat him up, I walked him home to protect him while the other teachers left the children to work out their differences off school grounds. When a fourth grade student pulled the pants off classmate in the classroom to the glee of those around – and the fourth grader dropped out – I sought to understand the almost two years of interactions and conversations that had led to that moment and his decision rather than condemning anyone. The generalized teacher disinterest in addressing sexual harassment in elementary classrooms was terrifying to me, but I worked hard to turn off my personal reactions and use those moments as an opportunity to learn about teachers and their perspectives on their work. I trained myself to reposition my mind, heart and body to be first and foremost a learner, controlling initial tendencies to judge or pass culturally-defined appraisals. These three examples underscore three critical events in the schools. The ongoing teacher-student and student-student interactions which I describe in more detail in chapter 9 were also foreign to my identity as a teacher and objectives, and it took me a while to overcome my insistent inner voice that reacted from my training and experience as a teacher to understand

^v Though Nicaragua gained political power through a military overthrow in the 1980s, when it lost power the Sandinista movement floundered, Ortega focused on consolidating personal power over grassroots power, and the country remained the second poorest in the region. Nicaragua also has a long, traumatic history of U.S. imperialism due to its geographic location and potential for a canal (beginning two years after gaining independence from Spain) combined with a Nicaraguan oligarchy and Catholic Church hierarchy that embraced an economic system that favored U.S. interests over everyone else's. Though Salvadorans questioned the oversized U.S. role in killing unarmed civilians and propping up repressive regimes, they made a point of not including the American people in their denunciations. For Nicaraguans, every American is an imperialist and I had many conversations with Sandinistas who spoke of their hatred and distrust of everything and everyone American.

In El Salvador, people legalized land-takeovers, legalized their opposition organizations, and legalized their movements. In Nicaragua, institutionality was never a part of history. In its place, caudillismo (strong-man

politics), amiguismo (putting friends in high places), and politiquerismo (political party politics) ruled. In El Salvador, the war ended in a negotiated settlement that laid the basis for the guerrillas to lay down their arms and work with the citizenry to grow their grassroots movement in many ways, including as a legal political party and more recently from all three branches of government through increasingly democratic institutions. A lively multi-party political system prevails in El Salvador, with two major parties dominating and ceding power at all levels of government through ongoing elections, while in Nicaragua Ortega has moved increasingly towards an autocratic government that some say resembles more and more the Somoza dictatorship he helped overthrow.

^{vi} A hugely successful fundraising campaign involved explaining to people how many days they worked to kill unarmed civilians, paying one million dollars each day to the Salvadoran military through their hard-earned taxes. We asked people to balance that destructive contribution by working one day for the people of El Salvador.

^{vii} I knew being a white woman from the U.S. would position me as an outsider in many ways, though I did not predict the mistrust and outright hostility we received from strangers, neighbors and some teachers – or its effects on my family. Modesto, my son, dropped out of school because of fears for his physical security and a general sense of unhappiness. My husband lived more in El Salvador than Nicaragua my second year of field work due to the harassment he received each time he entered and left Nicaragua from border agents who threatened multiple times to never let him back in the country. We paid thousands of córdobas in fines due to immigration regulations.^{viii} Harassment often involved aggression and intimidation: in our last house in the city, young men threw rocks at the house during the day; kids at a soccer park launched a bottle of rocks at me from afar, each time getting closer to their target until I picked up the bottle when it landed at my feet and refused to give it back to them; in Los Coquitos, a neighbor left me a smelly dead calf on my porch one evening after dark and we had to dispose of it that night; another night, a group of over a dozen men – including the gentleman with the dead calf – surrounded our house and began to cut banana leaves with machetes while my son and I stayed locked inside the house with the lights off wondering what they were going to do to us; and a young man threatened my husband because he was Salvadoran, yelling that there were three safe places for him: the hospital, the cemetery and prison. He passed in front of our house daily – sometimes sitting for up to an hour – for several weeks after this outburst until neighbors convinced him to stop.

Our rental situations proved precarious as well – a combination of anti-gringo and anti-Salvadoran sentiment along with the idea that we came from riches. A landlord rented a house to us that flooded two days later – a problem he knew about but had not told us about. With water up to my calves and dead rats and other garbage floating around the house, we lost most of our few precious belongings which we had left on the floor because we had no furniture. Another landlord's nephew reveled in singing, "Death to all Salvadorans," after we listened to a cumbia song in our house by a Salvadoran musical group that included the lyric, "Long live Salvadorans."

Though teachers never expressed these kinds of harassment, I felt mistrust from many until I got to know them. I also felt an enormous shift and wider opening when we returned to Nicaragua in 2013, despite original plans to stay only one year in 2012. Many commented that they thought I was like "all the other gringos" who come to Nicaragua for a short period of time and then leave, and never return or make contact again. My second year was when I was invited to observe the very private environment of MINED PD at the San Jose nucleus high school.

^{viii} Sub-categories include pedagogical content knowledge, craft knowledge, curriculum knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, and knowledge of purposes, self, context, learners, learning, the history and philosophy of education, and school finance/administration, among others

^{ix} Behaviorism defines knowledge acquisition as occurring through repeated stimulus-response conditioning. Cognitive models, like information-processing, describe how people use a set of memory systems to perceive, process, store and receive incoming stimuli - and control cognitive processes as one acquires knowledge. These approaches emphasize the importance of the learner in learning, positing that learners use what they already know to make meaning of new information, forming more complex cognitive representations of concepts over time and experience. A cognitive focus is often positioned in stark contrast to a behaviorist approach. A socio-cognitive approach bridges the two, highlighting interactions among cognition, the environment and behavior; it posits that most knowledge acquisition occurs through observation of others. Social learning emphasizes co-construction of knowledge through social interactions, language, and communicative competence.

^x See the extensive proposal done by Harvard University and several Central America organizations entitled, *Education in El Salvador for the Twenty-first Century: Challenges and opportunities*.

^{xi} The kinds of knowledge math teachers needed expanded exponentially to include knowledge of facts and routine procedures in arithmetic, measurement, estimation, geometry and statistics; deep conceptual understandings; abilities to communicate thinking and problem-solving using mathematical language; modeling real-life issues, applying math to real-life situations and understanding the role of math in society; knowing how to use a variety of physical and cognitive math tools; researching using math; knowing math history and contemporary developments; knowing how students learn math and how to instill confidence and positive dispositions towards math thinking and activity among diverse learners (Stacey, 2008).

^{xii} Changes in writing curriculum and teaching include issues around instructional time and how to spend that time (e.g., on writing or on skills drills), when and how to incorporate teaching of writing conventions, thinking of purpose and audience, what is considered writing, how to develop self-regulation and self-control in students as they focus on tasks individually and together, how to differentiate instruction according to wildly different skills and knowledge among students, how to change feedback content and processes, how to teach cooperation and collaboration, and more.

^{xiii} Principals had to ensure documentation of teacher attendance. At Los Coquitos, the teachers would stay at the school until 1-1:15pm each day, even when students were dismissed early. Their last act of the school day was to enter into the principal's 1st/2nd grade classroom to sign the attendance notebook in front of the principal. In El Roble, the principal would take the register to teachers each day or each week to sign. Teachers ensured compliance with this important register of their work.

Principals were required to ensure three deliveries of rice, beans, corn flour and oil to the school during the school year: in February, May and August. This required communicating with the MINED warehouse, arranging transportation from the warehouse to the school, and receiving the sacks of foodstuffs with a parent – all during the school day. At all three schools I visited, the principals measured specific quantities of foodstuffs to three students per section each day (Liria often provided food directly to parents). Principals and teachers shared dishing the cooked food onto each students' plate during recess (Los Coquitos and Los Jobos) or during a separate eating time (El Roble). The school nutrition program was a common topic of conversation that both brought teachers together and marginalized teachers who strayed from ensuring implementation in their classrooms.

Principals received texts and phone calls from the MINED and were responsible for ensuring they communicated the content of these messages to the teachers at their schools. The school nucleus principal and assistant principal were in charge of “the functioning of the Base School and in getting information to the neighbor schools” (Adriana). The Municipal MINED staff were responsible for communicating with nucleus principals and they in turn received their orders and orientations from the State MINED Delegation “that also is conformed in the same way, by the State Delegate and his team of pedagogic advisors” (ibid). Teachers ensured this waterfall in their informal interactions – at the MINED offices as well as at bus stops and in transit on urban and interdepartmental buses.

Principals were responsible for ensuring the teachers at their schools complied with all MINED requirements regarding registers and reporting. Teachers supported each other's compliance with reporting by meeting together during instructional time and for quarterly grading at each other's homes. Profe Liria met with a colleague she worked with previously to decorate her classroom with the annual GRUN slogans.

Principals and teachers implemented clean-up campaigns when ordered by the MINED, and daily cleaning of classrooms and common areas. Cleaning and cleanliness were an important focus – for health and hygiene at the school and to fulfill the school's potential in being a model for student behavior regarding being healthy and clean. Each school's appearance was also a reflection on the teacher team and how well teachers coordinated with parents. Each year, teachers involved their students in planting flowers and trees on school grounds and taking care of these plants throughout the school year, which included the last three months of the dry season (February to May) as well as periodic canículas or dry spells during the 6-month rainy season (May-November).

The MINED ordered extensive cleaning of school grounds at least twice each year. All 1st -11th grade schools around the entire country participated in cleaning the schools the same days – as a nationally coordinated campaign. Los Coquitos teachers organized students in these clean-up campaigns while Los Jobos and El Roble organized parents and older students to clean grounds with their machetes. Plants on school grounds at Los Coquitos and Los Jocotes died each year during vacations, when the teachers were not present to coordinate daily watering. Though all three schools had no potable water, they all had a well on school property. El Roble had the largest plot of land and the most cared for landscaping of all the schools nearby. The

principal had worked with the older elementary students to label each plant and tree by name, including the national tree. The community maintained the school grounds during all school vacations.

^{xiv} From field notes, September 2013. A retired teacher called her corner store in her home, “El Profe” because, Liria told me, “we are always Profe, even after we retire” (field notes, August 2012). For many, that segued with their rural community identity specific to the small San Juan region (see rurality section below) and the overlapping, much larger *Las Segovias* mountain region that included urban and rural areas; everyone I knew identified as *Segoviana* or *Segoviano*. The broadest cultural identity people spoke of proudly was a combined patriotic and Christian identity of being Nicaraguan and fighting as one nation for individual and national sovereignty and prosperity (see chapter 4). While most societal institutions were clearly demarcated along political party lines, only principals, specific teachers and outspoken family members publicly declared their allegiances to Daniel (Danielista or Ortegaista), the Sandinista Party (Sandinista), or the Liberal Party (Liberal); they were usually militants^{xiv} with publicly declared allegiance and Party responsibilities that mirrored their political affiliation. Many more teachers and family members self-identified as Party sympathizers^{xiv} - particularly with Daniel or the Sandinistas - as a way to distinguish their support rather than identity, allegiance or local involvement.

^{xv} This initially caused some confusion at each school, as they did not understand that I preferred working with all teachers if possible. The Los Coquitos principal was eager to get me into the other two classrooms, as she was the 1st/2nd grade teacher (and she taught 1st-3rd grades until late March). In El Roble, Profe Fausto was the 5th/6th grade teacher and he never invited me into his classroom, though I offered multiple times. Instead, like the Los Coquitos principal, he insisted that the other two teachers needed my help much more than he did.

^{xvi} Due to a sudden death in the family, I traveled to the U.S. for several weeks in March-April 2012.

^{xvii} Violence of many forms was common in Nicaraguan classrooms, and a common complaint of teachers and parents alike. The media referenced it as a problem, and I found one study on it in Managua classrooms. I have documented cases of different types of aggression and violence from relational to physical, including sexual harassment and abuse. I do not focus on this in the study because it became apparent to me that it required its own careful attention, to document and contribute to possible solutions. Both boys and girls were affected by all kinds of violence, though girls were more the targets of sexual harassment and abuse than boys.

^{xviii} This concern was not idle. During 2012, two drivers of vehicles were killed swerving to not hit a child on the highway, one 4th grade girl was hospitalized and more than a handful of high school students at San Jose High were either hit or experienced dangerous near-misses. The transit police were stationed outside the high school most mornings and afternoons during high traffic entry and dismissal, but none were stationed down the highway near the elementary school. The 4th grader had attended Los Coquitos for 1st grade and due to its high rate of classroom violence had transferred her to the unigra elementary - only to almost lose her during the accident three years later in which the two motorists died in order to not kill her.

^{xix} I told the Fe y Alegria regional director that I needed more observation and conversation time with more people, including the MINED. She responded testily that the MINED was doing a great job and had no role in the “bad teaching” occurring at the two schools I visited. To her, the teachers did not want to teach. They were unmotivated and downright lazy. She knew them, she insisted. She knew they needed to be denounced and my observations were the opportunity to take that step. When I later went to Managua to talk with my original contact, the Board member of Fe y Alegria explained to me that the NGO was extremely insecure about its tenuous relationship with the MINED and didn’t want anything or anyone to interfere with it. She explained then - something she had not shared with me during our planning of my research while I was still in the U.S. - that a student from the U.S. who had worked with her had worked 10 months before getting any information from the MINED. She characterized working with the MINED as extremely difficult and often antagonistic.

^{xx} The Fe y Alegria regional director demanded I come to the office each afternoon and the entire day Friday. I reminded her I spent most mornings in a classroom and most afternoons writing up my field notes. I now lived in the countryside and traveling to and from the office would require time and money that I did not have. If the NGO was able to offset those costs, we could discuss her request further though my time was limited. She refused - though the national offices routinely supported their volunteers with housing and a stipend. We finished the cantankerous meeting with an agreement that I was not a good fit for their 2012 education plan with its focus on their urban elementary school and pull-out from the rural area where I was working. I would continue my work in the rural schools on my own.

^{xxi} In one of the first TEPCEs I attended in 2013, the pedagogic advisor passed around three sign-up sheets: one for the state MINED offices, one for the Municipal MINED offices, and one for the nucleus high school records. When the first passed my desk, I asked the teacher next to me if I should sign and over the next two

minutes all the teachers around me decided I should. Ten minutes later, the nucleus principal approached me hemming and hawing, uncomfortable with whatever she had to say to me. I thought she might ask me to leave. Instead, she explained that it was an attendance list for the teachers and she asked that I not sign any of the participation lists again. She explained that she was going to pass them around again, and please, please do not sign them. I agreed. In this way, there was no formal written record of my having participated in these private, teacher-only meetings. In all but one PD session, the group leaders never added my name to the cover sheet of participants. In only one, Profe Dinora asked if she should put my name, and while teachers in the group said yes, I declined so as to avoid any questioning of the nucleus leadership by their superiors.

^{xxii} Topics included decimals, fractions, hundreds boxes, number lines, problem-solving with manipulatives, the scientific method, the world continents, the American continent, cardinal directions, paragraphs and topic sentences, anecdotes, questioning and pre/post reading activities.

^{xxiii} I did an IRB review before and after the interview and gave each participant full discretion over the interview transcript that I provided in writing within 1-2 weeks of each interview. The interviews began with my reading the consent form and asking if they consented to the interview. I then explained how recording the interview helped me focus on the conversation while also providing a faithful recording of exactly what was said. This helped me not rely on memory. I also explained why I recorded the conversation with my phone and a digital recorder. I then read the portion of the consent regarding recording. All agreed to have the interviews recorded. Upon finishing the interview I asked each participant if she was still willing to provide consent. All agreed. I provided each interview participant with a written transcription of the interview and told them I would ask them within two weeks if they had any changes, recommendations, additions or change of mind to not include their interview in the study. Everyone approved the transcript as I had delivered it to them. I then gave them two weeks to read and respond to any part of the transcript if they felt a response necessary. This allowed them to consent in retrospect (something I did regularly for classroom observations as well). After responding to questions “on the fly,” I provided them the chance to change or clarify responses as they saw fit. I did this to reduce the possibility of incorrect understandings; misspoken, incomplete ideas; or simply no longer wanting to share specific information so publicly – things that could easily occur if the interview situation was uncomfortable or distracting. They could retract information at any time. No one changed a word they said.

^{xxiv} I began with Profe Adriana and Regalia in August, and most concerns were immediately laid to rest. Everyone seemed to enjoy the opportunity to sit down and explain certain parts of their work and lives to me. Interview transcripts provided an organized structure to address important themes or areas of focus in a similar (semi-structured interview) format over a relatively short period of time. During the last five months of field work, I interviewed 8 classroom teachers, 2 nucleus leaders and 8 family members. The Los Coquitos teachers declined to be interviewed, due to the principal’s orders one told me. I was unable to juggle schedules with another nucleus leader whose responsibilities had taken her back into the capital.

^{xxv} The eight family members I interviewed were all female. This represented the teachers’ almost exclusive focus on mothers and grandmothers as those responsible for their children’s formal schooling. Their children ranged in grades from first to sixth. One grandmother had only one grandson attending elementary while everyone else had at least one child attending elementary and at least one child attending high school as well. One student had dropped out in fourth grade towards the end of 2013 after a critical incident in the classroom where I was observing that day. All in all, the women interviewed had children with varying degrees of academic achievement, classroom behaviors and teacher expectations. One mother had placed a sexual harassment complaint one day while I was at school and I had continued conversations with her about school security throughout the year. Several of the mothers were or had been part of the school’s parent committee for one or more terms, and coincidentally all of them who had served on their school committee had been treasurers at one time.

^{xxvi} Early on, I asked teachers to identify an area of teaching or learning on which we could focus together. After several conversations, all teachers expressed more interest in my helping teach students in their classrooms according to their daily lesson plans. I documented teacher requests for help and continued as a co-teacher or education assistant. When I taught, I studied myself and my students. If I found no time to jot notes while students worked, I jotted notes during recess and on the walk/bus ride home. Though I do not include anything from my teaching in this work, those experiences contributed to my understandings of multigrade teaching and teachers and helped me gain respect and trust among those with whom I worked.

^{xxvii} The taxonomy is the following: X is a kind of Y, X is a place in Y, X is a part of Y, X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y, X is a reason for Y, X is a place for doing Y, X is a “xxx” used for Y, X is a way to do Y, X is a stage or step in Y, X is a characteristic of Y

^{xxviii} Teachers struggled with if and how to implement the iterations of the Shared Responsibility Model and the “Live Pretty” Campaign, including conflicting government discourses and orientations about Model and Campaign activities, last-minute policy changes and top-down decisions – all couched within a punitive environment that expected 100% compliance. These related values programs provided an important framework for understanding values education from various beliefs-knowledge-practice perspectives^{xxviii}. Teachers constantly measured external and internal influences to decide if and how they would practice their craft, including implementation of evolving orientations. Based on their understandings – developed individually and together – teachers made decisions regarding what, how and why they would put different aspects of values education into practice, and ignore others.

^{xxix} The majority of research in Nicaragua was policy oriented and researchers did not enter a teacher’s world or the Municipal MINED offices. Teachers taught “the scientific method” in fifth and sixth grades for a few days as the memorization of six or seven steps. Nationally and locally, research was rarely done, published or discussed. International agencies funded research related to outcomes of programs they funded under international agreements and they relied almost exclusively on quantitative methods and descriptive statistics to test imported hypotheses and outcomes (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997; Choksi & Dyer, 1997). These studies generated limited knowledge that was not easily available to rural communities, if at all. They offered very little if any understanding, analysis and interpretation of education processes inside classrooms and schools (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1997).

^{xxx} The guerrillas had seriously wounded her father, and when an ambulance was en route to the hospital in the state capital with him aboard, fighters attacked the ambulance, making it swerve off the road and over a cliff. It was the second attack that killed her father.

^{xxxi} After Nicaragua and the U.S. signed the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty, Nicaragua’s neighbors took the case to the Central American Court of Justice claiming the treaty affected their physical security – they were had not been part of the negotiations and were not signatories to the treaty. The Central American Court upheld the other Central American countries’ claims, but both the U.S. and Nicaragua chose to ignore the ruling. The Central American Court closed its doors in March 1918 (Encyclopedia Britanica, 2013).

^{xxxii} Perez-Baltodano (2012) refers to as “*uno de los principales pilares del gobierno de Ortega y, además, el sostén de sus promesas electorales*” (p. 213)(one of the principal pillars of the Ortega government, and, moreover, the sustenance/support of its electoral promises): *la Alianza Bolivariana de los Pueblos de America* (the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of our America), or ALBA. I then analyze three pillars that I term “the 3 ‘C’s” in Ortega governance: centralization of power, *caudillismo* and contrarianism. I then take a brief look at the Ortega government’s *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Humano* to help readers understand how the teachers fit into this broad governmental plan as community (and even Sandinista party) organizers or activists in addition to their traditional roles as classroom educators of academic content, societal values and moral behavior.

When Nicaragua joined ALBA as a member nation in January 2007, Daniel signaled the importance of ALBA’s ideological, political, socio-economic and cultural development vision, structure and programs in his new government. True to ALBA’s endogenous nature, the Sandinista Revolution’s tangible gains and imagined possibilities had been one of many inspirations in ALBA’s formation; in 2007, Nicaragua joined the ALBA alliance to continue its historic trajectory, and not just in Nicaragua. This time, it would join other “revolutionary democracies” who were defining “21st century socialism” as an unfolding process that sought to redistribute resources to the working poor while creating a regional counter-hegemonic force powerful enough to confront and change existing economic and political inequities, and U.S. imperialism. Daniel was not just fighting for Nicaragua’s poor; he was fighting for Nicaragua and the rest of the region, which in turn would help Nicaragua (Morris, 2010).

An initiative like ALBA had been a goal of many Latin Americans for decades, even centuries. ALBA’s endogenous roots in Latin American’s shared history of resistance and repression were palpable in its vision of building one America, *Nuestramerica*, an idea that came from revered independence-era hero and military commander, Simon Bolivar^{xxxii}. Cuba and Venezuela founded ALBA in the new millennium after decades of U.S. imperialism in the region had created oodles of contradictions; these in turn had created fertile ground for movements to integrate resistance efforts through collaboration across real and artificially imposed borders. Cuba had the longest revolutionary, anti-imperialist history and Venezuela had the funds, from its nationalized petroleum fields.

From its beginnings, ALBA espoused two transversal axes that would cut through all its relationships and programs: respect of national sovereignty and respect of human rights. These were two fundamental rights the U.S. had systematically denied Latin America. Instead, the greatest superpower to the north that

championed democracy and national sovereignty in inspired discourse to its people and the world showed dark and often deadly “carrot and stick” behaviors to its Latin American neighbors: militaristic interventions cloaked as humanitarian programs, hand-picked dictatorships known to not respect basic human rights, and impositions of neoliberal policies that increased hunger, poverty and human suffering – all in the name of democracy and a healthy free world. Just not for the majority of Latin Americans.

ALBA directly responded to its members’ shared or collective history – of revolutionary resistance and imperialism’s repression and contradictions. It built off of these. ALBA worked from socio-economic principles of solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, complementarity and sustainability (Muhr, 2008). Its member nations shared a vision of *Nuestramerica* that worked towards long-term human-centered socio-economic development, not individual economic profit. In ALBA, economic development began with energy stability projects and expanded into other industry and finance in order to support and fund human social development. The ALBA model replaced individual enrichment based on competition and comparative disadvantage with “cooperative advantage.” ALBA nations premised development on a concerted effort to expand and strengthen existing social movements and citizen participation, to integrate organized society into social and economic development projects within, between and across Latin America and the Caribbean. According to ALBA, this kind of multi-level integration was necessary to ensure the organized alternative’s counter-hegemonic effects: to raise a unified Latin America out of “underdevelopment” – prioritizing the smallest and weakest populations and countries first – and to sit at the table equally with the U.S. and other economic powers.

In Latin America, the neoliberal “free market” system inherently relied on maintaining asymmetrical relationships in which more powerful people, companies, nations and multilateral agencies systematically exploited smaller and poorer countries (and their less powerful citizens) for their rich resources and cheap labor, with no profit sharing. In the new millenium, the U.S., World Bank, United Nations and other multilateral agencies continued to promote unequal economic impositions, termed “fair trade agreements,” as necessary for ensuring the “free market” system and democracy.

ALBA’s premise of “revolutionary democracy” and its Latin American democracy story was quite different from that of the U.S. Capitalist democracies are immune to the hardships they impose on people because of the veneer of market forces causing hardship, not people. ALBA decided to focus on people and controlling socio-economic development. In ALBA, economic democracy could not be separated from social, cultural and political democracy, or national sovereignty. The U.S. supports and participates in powerful global forces that strengthen a vertical, hierarchical and virtually unipolar world economy that strangles small, individual nations. Small Latin American countries could never influence let alone participate in this unipolar world economy. They could never negotiate on just terms for their people. In contrast, ALBA provided the financing, technical expertise and political space that helped small countries join together to build a south-south horizontal socio-economic integration based on their strengths and directly addressing their weaknesses. Humanitarian aid held no strings and was not part of a larger imperialist or capitalist strategy. ALBA sought to build a multipolar regional economy based on representative, direct and participatory democracy – not the façade of electoral democracy.

Putting its democratic ideology into practice, ALBA’s structure, processes and programs were based on shared geographical, historical and cultural roots as well as each country’s needs, interests, resources and potential. This social constructivist approach to integrated socio-economic development among ALBA member nations and their neighbors makes ALBA an inclusive effort, one that contributes to regional democracy and stability. It has established a newfound participatory power among smaller nation states that together have begun to insert themselves as one force, ALBA, into the virtually unipolar global economy. It has also ventured into the power structures as ALBA in the global economic powers’ multilateral watchdogs, like the United Nations. That is a central part of the ALBA democracy alternative. It plans to build its Bank of the South as a viable alternative to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, with better terms and without their inflexible neoliberal agenda.

At the nation state level, like so many aspects of ALBA, member nations defined their “revolutionary democracy” and “21st century socialism” differently, according to their own histories, resources and governance. Broad characteristics of revolutionary democracy included some combination of Public Power (the state) and Popular Power (an organized citizenry). This was part of the three-tiered direct, participatory and representative democracy that ALBA promoted (Muhr, 2008, p. 8). ALBA nations knew from their lived histories that any kind of full democratic participation could not happen when large numbers of people were hungry, marginalized, and ignored by the state, or suffered state repression and no respect of their basic human rights. It could not happen if people were stuck in a cycle of poverty due to larger economic forces outside their

control with no institutional emphasis on socio-economic self-development. ALBA thus united, strengthened and integrated efforts within and across Latin American countries in new ways.

ALBA's powerful presence in such a short period of time was possible in large part to Venezuelan oil, technological expertise and a charismatic, highly skilled political leader named Hugo Chavez. Chavez was a superb military strategist and ideological visionary. He was also enraged by the catastrophic effects of U.S. imperialism in his country and the entire region. An avid reader and historian, Chavez not only talked to U.S. leaders in a way no one ever had, he enunciated his anti-imperialist analysis in laypeople's terms, and took action to mitigate its destruction in the region. When he nationalized his country's vast oil reserves, he unflinchingly kicked out TEXACO, BP Oil and others who had virtually run Venezuela from their positions of power. Chavez then dedicated his country's precious resource towards social development – and not just for Venezuelans.

Stretching ideological principles and political-economic structures further than previous revolutions, Chavez envisioned an incredible opportunity that had never been realized before, an opportunity to unify *Nuestramerica* and build an alternative to the imperialist yoke all Latin America had been forced to bear. Using Venezuela's oil and knowledge, Chavez invested in regional energy stability with individual nations and groups of nations who agreed to invest proceeds towards long-term human development efforts. This vision, co-created across history by many actors and events – quickly evolved into one of the most powerful and dynamic counter-hegemonic structures and processes in the history of the Americas: ALBA. As an historic ideological, socio-political, economic, and cultural alternative, ALBA has created a collective power in Latin America that has been felt around the globe – in the U.S. and Europe, as well as Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

On the ground, ALBA often began with energy stability (using Venezuelan oil and technical support). Proceeds from energy businesses – usually mixed enterprises of private, government and social production initiatives – were invested in social development, including organized society initiatives. Social development included the eradication of hunger and poverty, the provision of basic services (water, electricity, transportation infrastructure), food and nutrition security, dignified housing, free health care, sports and cultural exchanges, basic education with a strong adult literacy focus and disaster prevention/emergency aid. It was an enormous social development package with long-term goals and commitments. It was not the traditional “humanitarian aid” provided in a handful of military planes for short periods of time with distribution overseen by foreign soldiers.

ALBA placed social development front and center as pivotal to the region's economic development and stability. Its guiding parameters of “Economic Zone of Shared Development” included sovereign trade, the rights of Mother Earth, food sovereignty and security, and provision of basic services as a human right (Muhr, 2012). It rejected integration on only traditional nation state to nation state agreements. It sought integration at multiple levels, and ALBA agreements occurred among multiple nation states who were ALBA members and non-members, as well as with non-state organized society actors in some countries, such as Town Halls, cooperative federations and political parties not in executive power.

Building ALBA was a complex, multi-leveled process that evolved with ongoing contributions from member nation representatives, organized society initiatives and non-members alike. It was woefully underresearched (Muhr, 2012), and its efforts were either lauded as successful by its supporters or dismissed categorically by its detractors (arguably the most powerful being the U.S.). Neither has provided evidence or systematic study of ALBA results at all the levels in which it operates. What is documented is that through its multi-faceted integration within and across nations in Latin America and the Caribbean, and among its socio-economic development programs, ALBA has directly and indirectly challenged neoliberal ways of functioning and communicating. ALBA's potential cannot be underestimated, a theme that has arisen regarding virtually all its member nations' leaders as well, including Hugo Chavez and Daniel Ortega. The 2014 downward spiral of oil prices began to affect ALBA investments in the short-term; any evaluation of long-term effects will be a longer time coming.

Inside Nicaragua, ALBA's economic dimension – ALBA Petroleos de Nicaragua, ALBANIC – was integrated with social-humanitarian projects in education, health care, permanent housing for the poor, and humanitarian aid assistance. ALBA began in Nicaragua in 2006, before Daniel was elected. Neo-liberal initiatives implemented by Chamorro, Aleman and Bolanos had moved administrative and fiscal responsibilities for health, housing and public transportation to the municipal level. The challenge was that mayors did not have the resources to respond to their populations' needs. In 2006, Sandinista mayors governed more than 75% of the Nicaraguan population and this neoliberal “cost saving” mechanism (the discourse used by the Liberal Party) placed an enormous legal and social responsibility on Mayors without providing them the money or resources

needed to respond to their peoples' needs. This unwelcome legal responsibility did provide an excellent rationale for seeking help with ALBA, despite Nicaragua not being a member nation.

An organization of mayors reached a cooperation agreement with ALBA member nations. President Bolanos refused to get involved. The agreement included founding ALBANIC petroleum and two social programs. After Bolanos forbade Mayors from his Liberal Party to participate in ALBA, the initial ALBANIC agreement benefitted populations living in Sandinista mayor municipalities only. ALBA had a policy of working across political party lines but many right-wing parties chose to attack ALBA rather than participate and benefit from its offerings. Within the first year of ALBANIC's operation, Nicaraguan bus fares went down 17% as did transportation costs for businesses of all sizes (CENIDH, 2006 – from Muhr08 as well).

ALBA projects in Nicaragua expanded in 2007 to include energy, agricultural, technical-industrial, education, training, and technological agreements, memoranda and letters of intent. As with many ALBA projects, Nicaragua integrated these economic initiatives with complementary investments in health and education for the poor and citizen participation initiatives. President Ortega entered into ALBA not as the president of Nicaragua, but rather as the president of the FSLN. In this way, all economic transactions are secret, and no one outside of ALBANIC knows exactly what kinds of transactions and at what rates of interest or periods of payment have been negotiated. It is rumored that Chavez also provided Ortega with a fund of \$500,000 each year to spend as he pleased on social development projects – out of reach of the Congress or any other government oversight.

ALBA combined new governance through horizontal and vertical leadership and decision-making within and across national boundaries. It pledged non-partisan implementation by explicitly prioritizing projects for the poor in municipalities across political ideologies, including providing low-cost fuel to poor communities in the U.S. National governance styles by ALBA members has not necessarily followed ALBA's model.

^{xxxiii} Ortega also provided stories and images projected onto a large screen of the U.S. government fighting against its own people in blatant violation of its own laws: illegal and secret spying on millions of citizens and international allies; government refusal to investigate hundreds of illegal assassinations of unarmed immigrants crossing the Mexican border; U.N. reports citing non-compliance with international human rights treaties in treatment of Guantanamo political prisoners; police attacking men, women and clergy in peaceful Occupy Wall Street protests. He repeatedly pointed to discrepancies in U.S. discourse and actions.

They [protesters] did not throw one single rock...they were not armed, they did not shoot anyone...In an absolutely peaceful fashion, there, with their ideas, with their words!...And the police arrived...Look at the police!... And that is not in Caracas [Venezuela]...that is not in Nicaragua, that is in the United States of North America!

He showed pictures of a Catholic Bishop being handcuffed and taken away by police, a woman with her hands cuffed behind her back being pulled by her hair into a waiting police van, an unarmed young man bloodied from a police beating. He then asked his audience a question that he immediately answered by quoting the Bible.

^{xxxiv} There are two measures for poverty and extreme poverty in Nicaragua.

^{xxxv} Literacy in Central America includes reading, writing and numeracy literacy. Adult literacy classes usually include 1st-6th grade curriculum offered in 2-3 years in an accelerated fashion. The Great Crusade was four months and the first literacy effort in Nicaragua.

^{xxxvi} The numbers of "soldiers" in the Popular Literacy Army is unclear. Within the same report from "La Verdad" the author provides three separate numbers: 52,180 from the second Congress of the Crusada Nacional de Alfabetizacion; 80,000 as a rounded number; and 92,582 in the text of his article and in a detailed graph with each of Nicaragua's 18 states with the number of brigadistas, popular literacy teachers, advisors and auxiliary technical support, staff with other functions and other support in each state and totals.

^{xxxvii} The students where I worked sang this song louder and with more energy than the national anthem, which they usually sang before this anthem each morning at school – or at least once a week at the school assembly. Each time the students yelled the line, "FIST RAISED HIGH! OPEN BOOK!" they would raise their right hand in a fist above their heads in unison and then open their hands wide, still high in the air.

^{xxxviii} Redistribution of wealth in favor of the nation's most impoverished communities was done in the short-term through "piñatas" or large give-aways of goods like tin roofing, basic foodstuffs, small farm animals and other small projects. Daniel instituted temporary salary bonuses for public servants who earned under the poverty line – less than the basic bread basket for a family of four, including teachers. Dismissed by critics as "migajas" or bread crumbs and political campaigning for votes, these stopgap measures relieved daily struggles for survival that were very real while the government also focused on longer-term structural changes. He promised to make the historic dream of a transoceanic canal become reality under Nicaraguan – not U.S. –

control, making it “the largest civil-engineering and construction project in the world” (Anderson, 2014, p. 50). Murillo characterized it as “A day of prophecies coming true... a day in which the doors to the future are opening with rights, with justice, with liberty, dignity and fraternity” (p. 50).

^{xxxix} El Pacto decreased the political playing field from 24 political parties to three (Seisdedos & Vilaplano, 2007) and allowed Ortega to “relentlessly pursue[d] ever larger spaces in Nicaragua’s institutions... passing through subsequent legal and constitutional reforms, and culminating in a triumphant election” (Berntzen, 2012, p. 170). As the *sempiterno* or “eternal” presidential candidate (Seisdedos y Vilaplana, 2007), Daniel lost four consecutive elections with 30 to 38% of the popular vote, his historic Sandinista base. Under El Pacto, he won the presidency in 2007 with under 40% of the vote because he and Aleman changed the simple majority requirement. Without El Pacto, Daniel would have had to face one Liberal Party candidate in a run-off election and he would have lost. Once Ortega gained control of the Supreme Court while president, he had the judges declare the Constitutional limits on the presidency unconstitutional so he could legally run for a third term. Crying foul, an opposition newspaper called him the “unconstitutional president” in all its articles from that election onward. In 2016 he announced an unprecedented fourth consecutive run, looking for his fifth term as president of Nicaragua covering a total of 25 years.

^{xi} All high school principals had to be Sandinista loyalists and most principals of large elementary schools. Fausto and Adriana explained that it was necessary to ensure local implementation of government projects. They were happy to comply and continue the project at every level possible. A neighbor who was a high school teacher in another municipality higher up in the mountains had been demoted from his post as principal farther east when Ortega entered office. They had replaced him with a woman who lasted one month, and they had at least one principal a year since he left. He had been the principal for five years. The principal at his then current high school was “designated by the government to be the principal almost solely for her political party affiliations, and her willingness to follow party lines in regards to education.” He felt it was impossible to teach well under the Ortega government because of all the orientations outside of the classroom they demanded. Fausto became the principal of El Roble in the shake-up of principals, replacing Ambrosia. The MINED had made him coordinator for all multigrade elementary schools in the 12-member nucleus as well – a political position. He served on a regional Sandinista Party organization as well as the high school parent committee, and was extremely active in his school community as well. I met and read about a number of principals who had been demoted simply due to not having declared allegiance to the Sandinista Party or Daniel Ortega.

^{xli} In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Liberal and Conservative Party spats led to wholesale dismantling of a previous government’s policies to impose one’s own to benefit one’s respective elites.

^{xlii} This top-down structure combined with a revolutionary *mística* or spiritual motivation and commitment to the struggle, to the point where its members pledged their lives to the struggle (Homeland or Death; Revolution or Death) and each person lost, who gave the ultimate sacrifice, inspired others to continue the fight and still others to join it. This history of tight, vertical leadership operated through a pyramid of small, unconnected “cells” whose militants carried out tasks provided from above; when someone was captured by Somoza they would truthfully have little to tell (Morris, 2010).

^{xliii} From CIA – how many cell phones are now in Nica v. how many landlines

^{xliv} Most Nicaraguans who leave their country go to Costa Rica. Officially over 250,000 Nicaraguans work in their neighboring country, while mostly women go to Europe to work as domestic servants and mostly men go to the U.S. Nicaragua has the lowest population of migrants to the U.S. of all Central American countries, even after Congress provided Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Nicaraguan immigrants in the U.S. after the devastating Hurricane Mitch in 1999. Many Nicaraguans told me either the U.S. was a last resort or those who went to the U.S. were ex-contra.

^{xlvi} I began every interview asking teachers to map out the education system and all who supported them in achieving their objectives. My example was the solar system, which all of them taught to their students. I began the exercise with them in the middle of the map, and most teachers including Liria, repositioned themselves. Some placed the government at the center of concentric rings or outermost ring – explaining that it was the most powerful. Others placed the government at the top of their map when it was a more hierarchical structure.

^{xlvii} Original text: “Un instrumento para llevar a la práctica las políticas públicas, estrategias y acciones de Nación, que permitan alcanzar los propósitos de reducción de la pobreza, Desarrollo Humano, Social, Económico, con justicia y desde el protagonismo de la persona, las familias y la comunidad.”

^{xlviii} The diplomado was implemented in a repeating cycle in which teachers learned about a government program one week, a government value the next and didactic planning or learning assessment the next, with the monthly TEPCE capping out the fourth week of workshops

^{xlviii} Original text: "...con estabilidad macroeconómica, con soberanía, seguridad e integración en armonía con la Madre Tierra, en beneficio de las familias nicaragüenses."

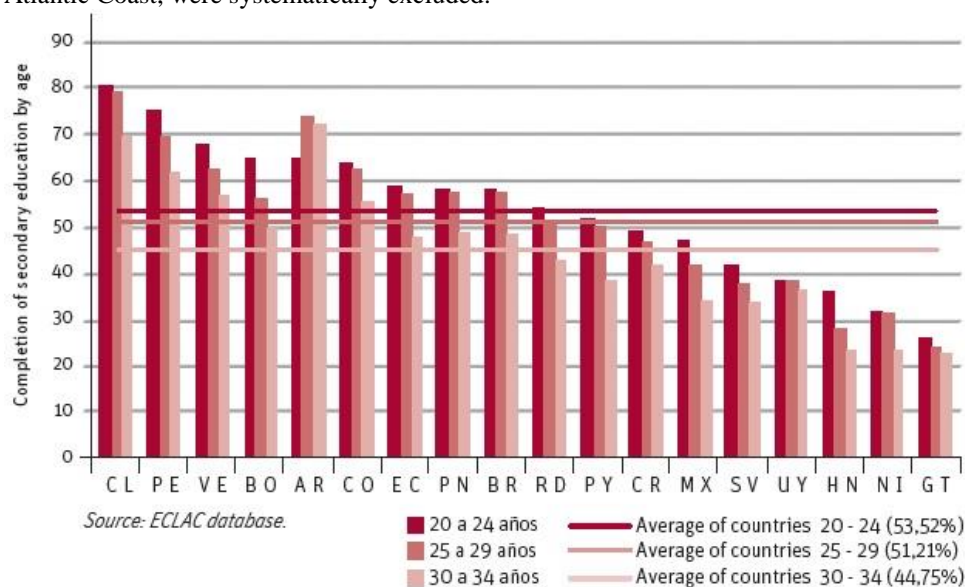
^{xlix} The Millenium Development Goals under the UNESCO Education for All agreements were signed by 187 in Dakarta in the year 2000. The MDGs placed Nicaragua in an unequal race against 186 other countries to provide universal access to primary education (through sixth grade) – and to comply with five other EFA goals related to preschool, primary, secondary and adult education. The government's Ministry of Education (MINED) articulated its 2012-13 organizational vision around these internationally mandated goals: "A Ministry...is a fundamental factor in the construction of the country with full school matriculation/enrollment with access to education for all children, young people and adults with a quality education that allows them to prepare themselves for the country's productive life based in fundamental principles of human rights"^{xlix} (MINED, undated).

ⁱ That same year in a "State of the Region" report, Cuthbert (2011) used MINED data from 2007 that showed 11,602 schools total. This showed a significant incongruity in the data with apparently 852 more schools in 2007 than 2008.

ⁱⁱ IEEPP found that 4,000 multigrade schools required infrastructure repairs totaling \$10 million US when only \$2 million was assigned to repair 800 schools in general, not just multigrade (p. 15). The government budgeted repair of between 582 and 848 per year, and an addition to between 29 to 207 schools per year between 2009 and 2011 (IEEPP, 2011, p. 19).

ⁱⁱⁱ According to this same census, the five main reasons school-age children did not attend school was lack of interest, economic factors, agricultural work, domestic responsibilities, and distance to school (access).

ⁱⁱⁱ The graph shows Nicaragua's challenge in stark terms: less than 32% of adults between 20 and 29 years old who lived in rural areas graduated from high school – and less than 25% of 30-34 year olds in rural communities graduated from high school. This part of the crisis in education systematically marginalized many rural youth from getting an education above elementary school, and barred many others from graduating from high school. High school was effectively limited to a small minority of the Nicaraguan population: mostly urban and middle class to wealthy. The poor, and particularly the rural poor in the north-central mountains and Atlantic Coast, were systematically excluded.



^{liv} In 2011, only 2.33 % (270) of the 11,600 high school graduates who took the math entrance exam of the UNAN passed it. Some wondered if this was representative of the true passing rate in elementary and high school classrooms. For the UNI / engineering, of the 2,283 high school graduates who took the math entrance exam only 5.7% (130) passed (La Prensa, Castilla, February 24, 2011).

^{lv} Liria fell asleep and then went outside to avoid falling asleep again and missed the rest of the reading. Other teachers did not remember a word read.

^{lvi} Nicaragua had eight Normal Schools that provided a 3-year teacher training program for elementary school teachers: five days/week or as a *sabatino* program held on weekends for students who worked during the week.

As part of the Battle for the Sixth Grade to achieve universal primary education, Ortega approved an accelerated nine-month teacher training for Sandinista youth who had graduated sixth grade to teach in isolated rural communities. Almost 40% of teacher training was “General formation” while 32% was in “psycho-pedagogy,” 22% in “professional practice” and 8% in “practicum” (MINED, undated). There was no exit exam or other evaluation done before students received their credential; program completion was the only requirement.

^{lvii} In 2012, teachers complained that they had not had any regular professional development in years. In 2013, the MINED offered 27 PD workshops, more than half on government policies, programs and campaigns. This was part of the unprecedented diplomado that the government regularly compared to the Great National Literacy Crusade due to its extensive nature and education focus. Like the Crusade, it also had a primary focus on changing teacher attitudes, though not as explicitly as during the Crusade.

^{lviii} The nucleus high school had an air conditioned computer lab the parents from previous years had paid for that was used once or twice each week by the students. When I suggested a series of teacher trainings in the lab the principal looked at me, said they would never come, and changed the subject. The high school computer teacher had vociferously complained that the MINED offered no training for computer teachers, that he had only a high school degree and had no specialty in computers. He demanded more training as he had taught himself everything he knew and he needed to learn more – from people who were more knowledgeable than him.

^{lix} Six year olds spent the entire school day with their tiny hands gripping a pencil just like older students, copying content from the board into their notebooks. All educators I spoke with believed developmental differences did not affect teaching or learning in the school setting; by six years old, students were ready to learn if they were motivated. Teachers never mentioned positive peer influences in a child’s development or how peer pressures could be tethered to help improve student behavior in the classroom.

^{lx} In 2012 the advisors did not visit Los Jocotes and in 2013 they did not visit El Roble.

^{lxi} The few schools that had abacuses had received them from international agencies. The ones I saw were kept under lock and key, unavailable to students “so they would not destroy them,” Reina explained. She didn’t like the abacus because it had too many beads and would confuse students.

^{lxii} “Being before the doing; fomenting a positive and entrepreneurial attitude towards life; that integrates, rescues, respects and strengthens different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities...; that prepares the student for the present and for the future, that the student learns to learn for the rest of life, and is prepared by using inquiry as the principal method to learn and teach; that is formed in law, the political constitution and its laws” (MINED, undated).

^{lxiii} To the chagrin of opposition figures, Nicaragua experienced the highest economic growth after the economic crash in 2008 of all countries in Central America. The World Bank (2012) reported that Nicaragua also had the strongest shift towards more equitable distribution of wealth in the region. Many attributed these results to the unsustainable handouts, placed in jeopardy with Hugo Chavez’ death in 2013 and the continuing fall of oil prices from which Ortega’s funding came.

^{lxiv} Every month I heard horror stories from one or more rural families who had a family member turned away from a clinic or hospital, released way too early, or had an operation that turned problematic; by December 2013, I knew more than a dozen families with someone who had died suddenly within six months of an operation at a public hospital. After talking for a while, someone would venture that their loved one’s death was related to the operation but they could not investigate; the state provided free health care and one did not take legal action against Daniel and the Sandinista Party. People regularly told me stories of getting laboratory tests at government clinics that came up negative, and then going to a private laboratory – where they had to pay – to find out what was wrong. I found a few outside investigations of the Nicaraguan health care system that pointed to similar issues the public education system faced: lack of training and knowledge, lack of accountability, no local or national evaluation system, political objectives overriding health objectives, lack of investment, and reliance on ALBANICA/Venezuelan funds for doctor’s salaries.

^{lxv} There are many similar examples in efforts as diverse as preventative health care (and the right to be healthy and access free health care), infant development, disaster prevention and mitigation, and basic services. All these efforts were never principally a GRUN responsibility. They were a shared responsibility that required active participation of community residents in their implementation and values enactment for the common good.

^{lxvi} Nicaragua was the only country in Latin America that had virtually no income effect and little urban/rural effect on school performance among its student population. Nicaragua also participated infrequently in regional standardized tests (Central America and Latin America-wide), making comparisons difficult.

^{lxvii} First Lady Murillo told the Nicaraguan population on February 27, 2013 that she felt very proud that Nicaragua was “the only country in the world that declares itself Christian.” As the Equipo Envio pointed out, the formation Murillo announced and promoted throughout 2013 was what she and officials regularly termed “Christian values, socialist ideals, solidarity practices” despite the Nicaraguan Constitution (which Ortega helped write) established that Nicaragua is “laica” and that Christianity “is a religious movement that is more than two thousand years old and that, therefore has had diverse interpretations throughout that long and complex history” (Equipo Envio, #372, March 2013).

^{lxviii} Where churches were not available (in most isolated rural towns), laypeople held ceremonies “of God’s word” in homes or a shared space that served as a community’s meeting center. Christian pastors traveled into rural areas more frequently than Catholic priests and often established a branch of a church in an abandoned home or temporary shelter where people could congregate daily.

^{lxix} Esteven was an example of complications raised for over-age elementary school students. By 2012, he had attended at least six schools and repeated three grades. He returned to El Roble after getting kicked out of a neighboring school for bad behavior during the first grading period of the year. Ambrosia, who had been his first grade teacher six years before was now his fourth grade teacher. Esteven was a large fourth grader who, like many young kids in his community, had difficult behaviors that turned aggressive quickly when he didn’t get what he wanted. At school, he often began the day with negative attention that rarely let up: during Assembly he would shove kids or keep his hat on or eat something and Fausto would yell and reprimand him; in the classroom he would play roughly, wander in and out of Ambrosia and Regalia’s classrooms or pick on the littler kids - and get yelled at by the teachers. His attendance became more and more irregular. His grandmother said she could not make him attend no matter what she did. She struggled to raise him, she told me, because he was this new generation of youth that was lost and alone. ‘It’s just not the same as if his mom were here,’ she said. When Esteven did attend class, Ambrosia and Regalia found him to be a handful, often telling him they wished he wouldn’t come or sending him home. He left El Roble school for the last time in 2013 after one of the littler fourth graders pulled down Esteven’s pants in front of the entire class, leaving him stunned and scared in his underwear and all his classmates laughing at him; he ran out of the room crying and never returned.

^{lxx} First Lady Murillo regularly denounced another anti-value, consumerism. Many parents and officials perceived consumerism as one more sickness imported from the U.S. It was not native to Nicaraguans who struggled to put food on their table each day and yet it afflicted many Nicaraguans. Young people packed cyber cafes every day and used school food money – a quarter or fifty cents^{lxx} – to buy 20-30 minutes of computer time. Instant communication made many aspects of rural life easier; the expense tightened family budgets. People spent money each week on cell phones that would have gone towards basic food items. Though most participated in this cultural shift, access to the internet – as Fausto pointed out above – allowed youth exposure to anti-values they otherwise could not access or know about.

^{lxxi} This arose loudly when my next door neighbor’s son – one of Ambrosia’s nephews – shared pornography at the San Jose High School one morning while drinking alcohol with his friends. The school’s staff huddled for over two hours to decide how to respond, and the conversations that followed tended to blame the internet and computers for allowing youth access to “sinful content that exposed them to a multitude of vices.”

^{lxxii} House to house fumigations in urban areas was a weak response to the quantity of adult mosquitoes, active larvae and eggs that existed. In rural areas fumigation was completely ineffective due to large verdant areas with water captured outside of homes and the areas of fumigation. In addition, the chemicals used during fumigation were highly toxic to humans. Many people with infants, respiratory ailments or other health issues (a large portion of the population) refused to open their homes to fumigators. This created spotty fumigation in every city and many places of refuge for mosquitos fleeing the toxic cloud. As noted, the chemicals did not affect mosquito eggs or larvae. Nonetheless, fumigation was a constant fixture in people’s daily lives during cholera or dengue outbreaks.

^{lxxiii} In 2016, Ortega announced Murillo as his vice-presidential candidate. The Electoral Council the Sandinistas control announced the illegality of the major opposition Liberal party’s leadership, and they are assured a win in November. This raises the specter of a family dynasty in the executive and the Sandinista party.

^{lxxiv} The four branches were the National Assembly (Congress), Supreme Court, Electoral Council and Presidency. Of 153 Town Halls around the country, the Sandinista Party with mayoral candidates hand-picked by Murillo, won 134 or 88%. For 2012-2017 legislative term (from 2011 elections), the Sandinistas won 67 deputies to the Liberal Party’s 2, and the UNE won 27 seats.

^{lxxv} Ortega regularly held capitalist, neo-liberal models imposed by the U.S. and implemented in Nicaragua under previous Liberal Party governments as the roots behind Nicaragua’s poverty and socio-economic

challenges. According to Ortega, the Liberal Party promised development in Nicaragua through the economic prosperity of an elite few and they had never delivered. They had failed. The Somoza dictatorship and more recent neo-liberal governments had focused exclusively on economic development, not human development, keeping the majority of Nicaraguans in abject poverty. In contrast, Daniel argued, the Sandinista's human development focus based on Nicaraguan values incorporated Nicaragua's greatest strength into societal transformation: its people, its human resources, its history and its unrealized potential. Broad participation and government investment in human development projects would be the foundation on which local and national economic development would follow. This was a political argument based on distinct values, beliefs and philosophies.

The Sandinista model turned capitalism on its head. The GRUN took on the responsibility of ensuring the development of families and communities with the greatest needs: those living in extreme poverty. In its discourse and project focus, the GRUN emphasized women, children and youth living in marginalized communities where hunger and inequity were a fact of life. This commitment to those most in need grew out of Christian obligations to walk with the poor combined with values of shared responsibility, solidarity and equity. The poorest of the poor needed free health care and free education, food security and nutrition, jobs and dignified housing – rights they had been denied during generations of U.S. imperialism working with Nicaragua's tiny economic elite and Catholic Church hierarchy. Under GRUN guidance, teachers would help ensure these basic rights and improved living conditions among the poorest sectors of the population in their communities and homes.

^{lxxvi} The MINED had a policy that teachers, not the MINED, pay for their training materials. This contradiction was exacerbated when quick replications contributed to facilitators forgetting to tell teachers ahead of time to bring money to buy documents required to fulfill the day's requirements. Apparently, this contradiction and hardship was palpable only to teachers. MINED officials said a motivated teacher with a good attitude would find the money to pay for the required materials. In the "Live Pretty" training, teachers learned that Friday morning that they needed to produce 16 córdobas to comply with MINED orientations to write and present a plan to the MINED in just a few hours. The MINED provided the conditions for teachers to comply by making the document available – to those who paid. Teachers who could not pay for the master plan in that moment would not comply with MINED orientations; they could not look at or touch the master plan before they paid for their own copy^{lxxvi}. The fact that most teachers had paid for at least one document that week already, and that they had not been told to bring money that Friday, would be quickly forgotten. Teachers who did not comply would be labeled unmotivated or worse. MINED officials did not take into account the hardship they placed on teachers at the beginning of the school year, when they had not yet been paid and they had high costs in January and February due to children's expenses for beginning school (two uniforms, two to twelve notebooks, and a pair of new shoes for each school-age child).

^{lxxvii} The teachers did their initial POA as usual in December 2012. They then did the "Live Pretty" plan as an update in February 2013. In March, Murillo sent another national plan for teachers to "adapt" that read like an internal Sandinista document. Many teachers balked at this change – for it being the third attempt in four months and for the language and political party overtones that explicitly placed teachers as not just government spokespeople but Sandinista Party spokespeople as well.

^{lxxviii} Every December, school principals submitted an Annual Organizational Plan (POA) for the next school year. They copied the same POA format they submitted each year, making small changes (e.g., number of students) before submitting it to the Municipal MINED.

^{lxxix} There were also two teachers who lived in the sub-region and worked in isolated schools in a different region. For this one-week training, they had received permission to attend the SJdLM nucleus even though it was not their working group. They were not provided a copy of the plan and when Liria gave them one by accident, charging them the 16 cordobas the MINED told her to charge, she had to return and take it back from them. Still, there were two schools who did not have a copy that day. It turns out they did not need a copy since everyone copied from everyone else without referring to their own copy very often.

^{lxxx} The closest photocopier was in the municipal capital – a 28 córdoba (US\$1.27) ride on four buses that could take more than two hours round trip. The teachers decided that even though it would be most helpful for everyone to have a copy of the document that day, it was not a feasible option. Enough schools paired up together that they overcame the document shortage. They arranged for a teacher to get copies in the coming days and decided when and where others would pick them up.

^{lxxxi} In 2012, the MINED had held all TEPCE and PD in the state capital where multigrade teachers had divided by grade levels taught (1st-3rd and 4th – 6th). Though national officials had created nucleus schools years

previously, the municipality had not enforced them. February 2013 was the initiation of this national model in the San Jose region. This was one reason why the facilitators were confused about how many schools were members, though in August 2013, two facilitators in their interviews were unsure what the number was still. It had not changed all year.

^{lxxxii} NGO staff did the same. At one high school math training in an NGO office, a Spanish volunteer repeatedly used the same phrase with math teachers from the NGO's urban school: "You all know this." In their evaluations, the teachers disagreed. They provided concrete examples of areas in math they had never learned until that training and asked why the MINED did not train them.

^{lxxxiii} In El Salvador, a diagnostic study was a lengthy, participatory affair which required many meetings and the collection of much data to then analyze. In El Salvador diagnostic studies had been done by NGOs working in communities. NGO staff worked closely with community leaders to collect and then analyze the information. It had been a group effort with trained people providing technical support. I had never seen anything similar in Nicaragua and I was alarmed that the teachers would be responsible for such an enormous task. On the other hand, the teachers did not seem alarmed, so I sensed that "diagnostic study" in Nicaragua meant something quite different. That turned out to be very true.

^{lxxxiv} Poor school administration of the food program raised many questions. Some schools did not provide meals or parts of meals (e.g., pinol) regularly and yet everyone ran out of food around the same time. Where the food went that teachers never distributed and students never ate remained unclear.

^{lxxxv} I received my copy from an educator at the University of Central America in Managua who told me to make sure I returned it to her because copies were scarce and she could never replace it. It was not available on the MINED websites, one of which was routinely inoperable or had unusable links.

^{lxxxvi} The school programmed computer classes in the lab once or twice each week for the students. When I suggested to the high school principal that a series of teacher trainings in the lab could help change that gap, particularly when the *diplomado* required credit hours on the internet, she looked at me and said, "They would never come." When I asked teachers what they thought of the MINED offering computer classes and a lab to them, many expressed interest.

^{lxxxvii} One action that was highlighted as its own pillar while also appearing in the multigrade curriculum was donating blood. Donating blood was presented as a solidarity action because it was always in short supply. In daily life a patient had to organize donors within a relatively short period of time – stipulated by the doctor. Each patient's donors would provide the amount and type of blood the patient would need for the operation; only once the patient had organized donors and paid them to travel to donate their blood at the hospital would the doctor put the operation into the calendar.

^{lxxxviii} The MINED evaluation numbers raised more questions than they answered. The announcement that overall academic performance was "86, 87, 85 percent" demonstrated the MINED's inability to provide an exact figure, raising questions about what data they used and why they could not have one average of academic performance. As was common in MINED articles, public announcements and more internal report-backs like the one above, the MINED provided no information on how they calculated the average, more detailed data by grade or grouping of grades (or any other breakdown). The MINED provided raw data for enrollment statistics irregularly. It only provided percentages (never raw data) for other indicators or touted improvements in pass rates, promotion rates and drop-out rates – and usually even then for a specific school, Managua district or highlighted municipality.

The high percentage in overall academic performance reported above demonstrated how the MINED used data: to present a rosy picture publicly – with not enough information to substantiate the figures. When secondary percentages dropped to 53%, the overall performance in the high 80s became even more questionable; even though there were fewer high school students, the municipality and thus its averages included more than a handful of large high schools. Without access to the raw data, it was impossible to make sense of the reporting provided; educators and opposition figures complained about the ongoing challenge to access data and substantiate public MINED statements about supposed improvements in education infrastructure, access and quality.

The two major content areas cited as the weakest – math and language arts – were also the MINED's highest priority. Math and Language Arts were the two content areas taught in first and second grades, and continued to receive the most attention in instructional hours throughout elementary school. They were also the two content areas on which the MINED focused for helping high school students in their preparation for university entrance exams. The only academic content for which the MINED offered PD nationally was in Language and Literature; math became a focus in NGO PD in 2013 – with up to five 2-hour sessions in the San

Jose region for 15 multigrade teachers only. The challenges cited in the report back – as low academic performance in the early high school grades – pointed to the weak knowledge base students gained in the elementary years combined with weak teaching and learning in high school, particularly the early grades.

^{lxxxix} Low student performance had been stagnated for years, across many governments. Nicaragua had been the lowest performing country in all of Latin America in EFA measures for almost a decade. It was not clear whether the MINED believed no support was necessary, teachers were incapable or MINED officials knew the MINED did not have the institutional capacity to provide pedagogical support to teachers. The MINED ignored low performance in academics by not providing PD or accompaniment to teachers, and chose to focus instead on values to change teacher behaviors. Teacher behavior was the next point in the Municipal MINED Delegate's report.

^{xc} The MINED ensured that youth participating in leagues like "I Make Homeland" or history and patriotism competitions learned about Sandinista heroes, and events and places the GRUN highlighted in its own commemorations and activities. These included anti-imperialist struggles from the 1800s, like independence day and the Battle of San Jacinto against William Walker. It also included more contemporary struggles like "the heroic gesture of Benjamin Zeledon" who fought U.S. Marines in 2012 after the U.S. ousted President Zelaya, "the heroic gesture of General Augusto C. Sandino," the National Literacy Crusade, Carlos Fonseca (intellectual leader of the Sandinistas killed during the revolution) and Tomas Borge (a member of the ruling Sandinista Junta) who were idealized as "examples of national dignity," Autonomy gained in the Atlantic Coast by indigenous and Afro-Caribbean Nicaraguans, and the "Indigenous, black and popular resistance" (MINED INFORMA, September 2, 2013).

The MINED touted these competitions as national, with every school participating. Towards the beginning of the school year, every grade in every school would hold a competition to determine a winner for each grade, and those winners would compete against each other to define a school-wide winner. Each school-wide winner then participated in a municipal competition with all school-wide winners in their municipality. The winners of each municipal-wide competition participated in a state-wide competition and the winners of each state-wide competition participated in a national competition in Managua. The MINED oriented teachers in participating schools to work extra hours with their best students to help them win – often during regular instructional hours.

None of the multigrade schools in our nucleus participated in these competitions despite their appearance in the annual school calendar and the MINED's promotional materials citing full participation of every school. Multigrade school participation was effectively ignored. It was assumed, a few teachers commented, that rural students would never win so why bother. It would be a waste of the teacher's time. Teacher's seemed to agree. The odds against the multigrade children were high and the uphill battle to get a child prepped and ready for the competition was not worth the effort. I seemed to be the only person wondering aloud if this were really true and why someone didn't test it.

The systematic variance in participation that belied the MINED's promotion of all schools participating in these important and formative events was overlooked by the MINED. Rural youth had other opportunities to incorporate into Sandinista-led activities that were less academic; they could get involved in special leadership efforts through other initiatives. The MINED would identify "the best of the best" from a mostly urban pool with few if any multigrade schools participating. There was no extra effort on the part of the Municipal MINED in the central mountains to prepare students who could have participated. There was no push by the MINED on multigrade teachers or nucleus facilitators to engage all teachers in all schools, as MINED propaganda erroneously portrayed participation in these values events. Lax MINED supervision allowed principals and teachers to not provide the opportunity to their students to engage in school-wide contests which ensured they had no opportunity to participate at municipal, state or national contests ever.

Environmental leagues and competitions demonstrated similar participation trends, MINED promotion and overall objectives – and in 2013 some added the full "Live Pretty" name to their Environmental League's names. The leagues and competitions included environmental education from the school curriculum as well as the promotion of "values of respect, solidarity, team work and love of Mother Earth" (MINED INFORMA, August 27, 2013). Top students spent the extra time in a league studying solid trash treatment, forestry, botanical information, what is Botany, what is a nursery or seedbed, the parts of a tree, among others" (MINED INFORMA, August 27, 2013). Results were similar with other leagues. "Thanks to this knowledge," the MINED quoted an unidentified female, "the students have become environment promoters as well as student monitors in Natural Sciences classes and with their example they inspire other children to have a love of Mother Earth" (MINED INFORMA, October 4, 2013).

Teachers decided who would participate in the leagues and competitions and who would not. The multigrade teachers did not participate, and principals did not follow the MINED orientations stemming from the national office. The Municipal MINED officials did not pressure multigrade principals or teachers to participate leaving the space for teachers to ignore national orientations. I was left to wonder if anyone would actually allow a rural child to participate in an environment in which the activities seemed to be geared almost selectively towards urban students only.

^{xci} First/2nd graders would show their reading fluency (timed). Third/4th graders would show values knowledge by presenting the NGO-provided definitions for 14 values. Fifth/6th graders would show their math knowledge. The teachers in El Roble and Los Jocotes chose not to pass the NGO's pre-competition information to all their students. The schools were allowed to choose one boy and one girl per classroom to attend the competition and compete. Teachers gave the one copy of the information to one competitor to share with their classmate. In Los Coquitos, Profe Pridi practiced the addition and subtraction problems that were to be part of the competition with all her students.

^{xcii} Political "cuadros" describes those who are fully versed in the history, structure and programs of their political party, and have committed to doing whatever they are ordered to do by party leaders. I have chosen the translation "commanders" as a decent translation because the alternative of "management" does not do the term justice as it is used in Central American politics. Cuadros and militants are terms used in all political parties – right, center and left. Cuadros are militants.

^{xciii} These were entitled "The Training Pillar," "Evaluation and Updating of our Political, Social and Community Structures," "Deepening of the Direct Presence Model," "More Quality, Efficiency and Productivity from the Model of Alliances" and "Audits, Evaluations and Citizen Satisfaction." The sixth and eighth were most associated with what teachers were already doing: "Values, Building Consciousness about the Christian Socialist Solidarity Project" and "Goals and Actions of Good Government Ministry of Education." The seventh pillar, "Incorporation of Creativity, Innovation and Initiative," read like a GRUN wish for the future to integrate information technology and other "creative" innovations into formal schooling.